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PLAY METER Magazine

FEBRUARY

VOLUME 24, No. 3 • 1998

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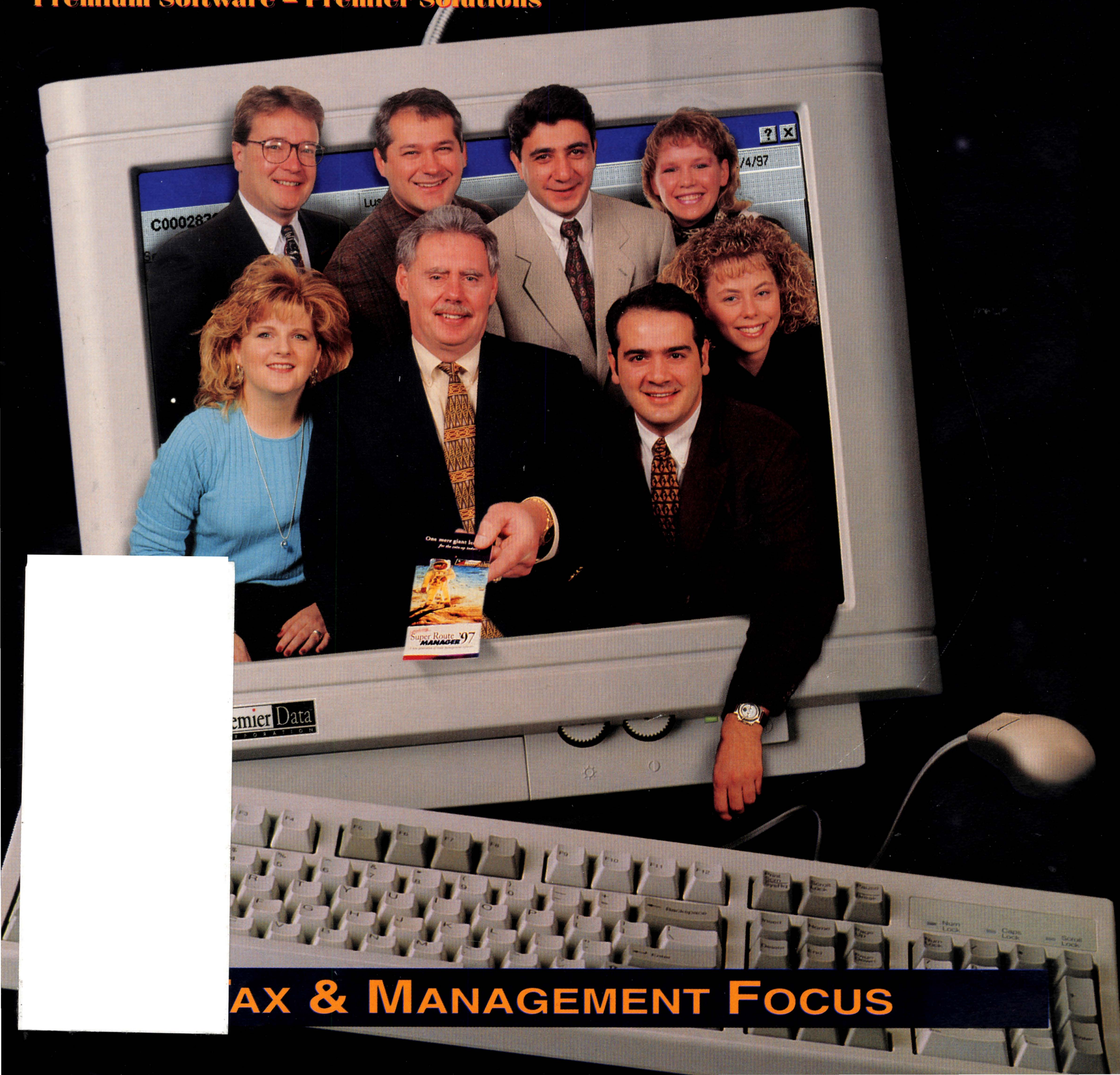
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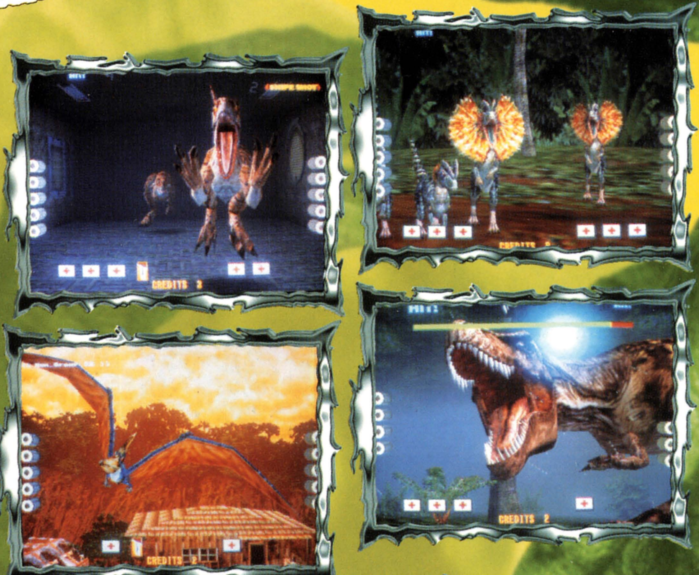

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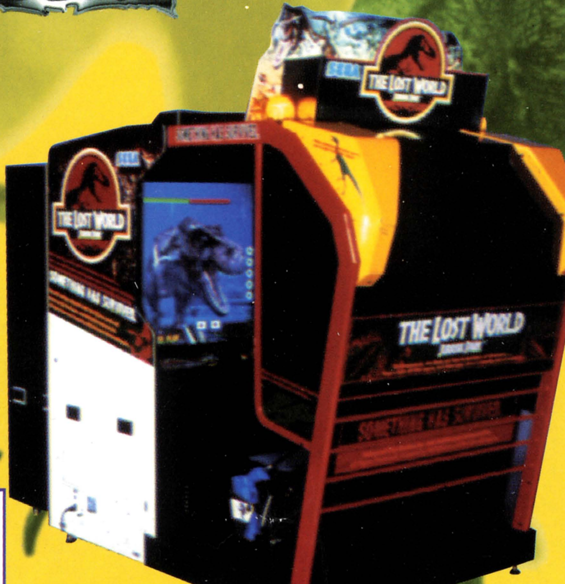

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News BULLETIN

ASSOCIATIONS FORM JOINT PROMOTION COMMITTEE

Following a meeting in Chicago last month, the AAMA, AMOA, and IAFEC announced the formation of a joint committee charged with the task of positively promoting issues that affect the coin-op amusement industry. The committee will initially focus on the recently developed parental advisory system and educational program. Other issues will include: dollar coin, location promotion, and general public relations.

"We are extremely pleased that these three groups representing all of the different levels of the industry are coming together to focus on issues which affect the industry as a whole," said AAMA industry promotion committee co-chairman Dick Shelton. "We look forward to tackling the issues which are currently in the spotlight and putting a positive spin on our efforts by pulling together as a unified group."

BETSON ACQUIRES ASSETS OF TWO MONDIAL OFFICES

Mondial Distributing and Betson Coin-Op Distributing have signed an agreement for the sale and purchase of certain assets of Mondial's offices in Norwood, Mass., and Rochester, N.Y., announced Mondial president Richard Sarkisian. The sale was set to close Jan. 30.

According to Sarkisian: "Mondial had contemplated changes for the Norwood and Rochester offices, and discussion with Betson ensued, leading to an attractive offer for certain assets of those offices. After careful analysis we concluded that closing the two offices will be a positive step for our organization as it will allow us to concentrate our management capabilities and resources on the two remaining offices and adjust to an industry that has continued to undergo rapid changes. We are confident that the Springfield, Mass., and Bensalem, Pa., offices will become stronger players in their respective markets and that both our vendors and customers will see that strength reflected in improved service, better motivated employees, and greater financial resources."

***Play Meter* publisher Carol P. Lally (r) recently traveled to Los Angeles to attend a special celebration given by C.A. Robinson in honor of the company's Leah Bettelman. Full coverage of the event will be included in our March issue.**

ASI SETS SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Twelve seminars will be available for ASI attendees at the March 26-28 show in Las Vegas, Nev.: "Service with a Twist: Managing Fun," "The Great Amusement Giveaway and Radio Program," "Bowling for Dollars," "Maximizing Returns on Your Coin-Op Game Portfolio," "Concession Go-Karting 101," "Touch Screen Countertops," "Open Arcade Architecture: What PC-Based Coin-op Means to You," "Miniature Golf 101," "Redemption for Rookies," "Digital Imaging Entertainment," "Today's Jukebox: Keeping Your Music Competitive," and "Kiddie Rides."

Of special interest is the returning Tech Fest series of seminars featuring the expertise of Randy Fromm (exclusive technical writer for *Play Meter*). In addition, ASI will continue the traditional Redemption Field Trip (Wed., March 25), and plans a bigger Operator Party (Fri. March 27) that will include Play Meter and AAMA award presentations and a silent auction. Instead of a banquet, the AAMCF will sponsor a golf tournament (Wed. March 25) with a 1 p.m. shotgun start. For more on the show, call (708)333-9292.

SEGA ENTERPRISES ALIVE AND WELL

The development of Sega GameWorks has not replaced Sega Enterprises Inc. USA, which maintains an office at 255 Shoreline Drive, Suite 400, Redwood City, CA 94065. The 1998 Play Meter Directory lists Sega GameWorks and Sega Pinball separately but not Sega Enterprises. Please make note of the company's phone and fax, respectively: (650)802-3100; (650)802-3076. The Sega Enterprises staff includes Howell Ivy, president; Takeshi Uchara, senior vice president; Kimberley Walman, vice president of operations; and Michael Cooper-Hart, vice president of product development.

INDIA AMUSEMENT EXPO IS MARCH 11-12

The India Amusement Expo returns to the Taj Palace Hotel, March 11-12, featuring both a U.S. Pavilion and International Pavilion. The event is sponsored by the American Amusement Machine Association with the support of the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. For more information, call (708)333-9292.

STATE ASSOCIATION DIRECTORS MEET

The AMOA Council of Affiliated States Meeting was held in mid-January at the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas, Nev. The main topics on the agenda were the tobacco issue and video violence. Feb. 25 was set as the date for industry members to unite and gather in Washington, D.C., to seek compensation for cigarette vending machines that are in jeopardy of being banned. Other subjects under discussion included a proposed technician certification program, a method to track national and state legislative actions, and the seminar program for AMOA Expo '98. Look for more on this event in the next issue.

ATARI INTRODUCES NEW DRIVING GAME

Atari Games introduced its newest driving video, *California Speed*, last month. Described as a street-priced driver, *Speed* utilizes hardware designed around 3Dfx's Voodoo Graphics chipset and offers an accessible driving model, in-depth selection of cars and tracks, and eye-catching graphics. The company will ship the game at the end of February in 25- and 33-inch monitor configurations. One of the game's most important features is a new player-friendly driving engine.

"Our goal was to make a fun driving game with a fresh approach," said veteran coin-op game producer Steve Ritchie. "Easy driving and reduced crashing make *Speed* popular with just about everyone. We also have a more advanced electronic system and graphics are far better quality than other games at this price point. The game was designed from the first day to be a street-priced driver, so we knew we had to offer a huge variety of tracks, cars, and new driving experiences to give the game the depth needed for the street. For more on *California Speed*, see "What's New" next month.

SKEE-BALL ANNOUNCES PROMOTION AND ADDITIONS

Skee-Ball Inc. recently added several new staff members and promoted key individuals in the sales and engineering areas. Changes in personnel include:

Thomas Kane has been promoted to vice president of sales. He will remain in the Phoenix, Ariz., office, and assume responsibilities for the Middle East, South America, expanded domestic territories, and key national accounts, while maintaining his present duties. Shandra Grier has been hired as the sales and marketing assistant in the Phoenix office.

Jeff Hudson has been promoted to director of operations. His new duties will include corporate promotion scheduling, inventory control, trade shows, sales and production coordination, and cost control. Michael Sladek will absorb the direct sales responsibilities handled by Jeff for eastern domestic distribution, certain national accounts, and Europe.

Dennis Keeny has been promoted to vice president of engineering and will now assume responsibility for corporate engineering and product development in both Phoenix and Chalfont, Pa. In addition to Keeny's promotion, four new members have been named to Skee-Ball's engineering and design team. They are: Timothy Dutt, Dennis Nordman, Antonio Boyer, and Randy Griffard.

DATA EAST TRANSFERS *STAMP CLUB* TO SEGA

Data East Corp. of Japan has transferred manufacturing and intellectual property rights of its *Stamp Club* photo stamp machine to Sega Enterprises of Japan. As many as 30 staff workers in Japan devoted to the *Stamp Club* project will be moved to Sega, according to *Game Machine* magazine, which claimed that Data East would curtail the development of coin-op video games.

However, Data East USA's senior executive vice president Jeannie Petit told *Play Meter* late last month that the fate of the company's operations in this country remains unknown. "The only thing we are comfortable saying is the *Stamp Club* has been transferred to Sega," she said. "Nothing else has been decided."

Q-ZAR LOCATIONS CLOSE IN BANKRUPTCY

Dallas, Texas,-based Q-Entertainment and several affiliate firms that make up the corporate chain of Q-Zar laser tag facilities have converted an earlier filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection to a Chapter 7 liquidation filing, the *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram* reported. That move resulted in the closure of all Q-Zar's company-owned stores including its 50,000-square-foot Q-City in Mesquite, Texas. Several franchise locations reportedly remain open.

NEWS BRIEFS

☛ Joe Bundra has joined the sales department at Midway Games and Williams Electronics Games as special projects manager. He will focus on the *Touchmaster* countertop line and Williams and Bally pinballs. Bundra has over 15 years of coin-op experience including his most recent position as vice president of sales at Creative Electronics & Software.

☛ Heads Up Technologies has installed its LaserTrek laser tag adventure at The Factory, an FEC located at a former Q-Zar entertainment complex in Anchorage, Alaska, the first facility in the northwest United States to offer LaserTrek.

☛ Kiddie Ride Enterprises has secured the license to manufacture and market kiddie rides featuring the Children's Television Workshop Sesame Street characters. Until now, the rides were produced and sold only in the United Kingdom and Europe. The three rides are *Elmo and Zoe's EZ Rider Racecar, Bert and Ernie's 123 Fire Engine,* and *Big Bird's Jet Ways Airplane,* which will be produced in the company's Edgewood, N.Y., manufacturing facility. All feature sound, animation, music, interaction, and the new Accu-Track drive motion system.

☛ Betson Enterprises in Carlstadt, N.J., has promoted Joe Beston to the post of sales manager. Beston has over 20 years of industry experience and has held various marketing posts with Betson for the past 13 years. Betson also appointed Tom Faranda to key account manager. He has been with the company for 20 years.

☛ The South Carolina Coin Operators Association is gearing up for its annual convention and trade show Feb. 19-21 at the Sheraton Hotel and Convention Center in Columbia, S.C. For details, call Helen Sikes, (803)345-2048.

☛ Oriental Trading Corp. has issued a new Happy Sack, a complete party pack that includes a variety of items such as straws, key chains, coloring books and colors, plastic frisbees, play disguises, Halloween attractions, and more. The company is also offering a new line of Mardi Gras items for this month's Carnival season.

☛ Konami Computer Entertainment, the Japanese video game manufacturer's United States-based consumer division, has opened an all new development office in the San Francisco Bay area for console and PC development. Konami Computer Entertainment America is located at 1400 Bridge, Parkway Redwood City, CA 94065. Konami's coin-op division remains at its headquarters in Buffalo Grove, Ill. ▲

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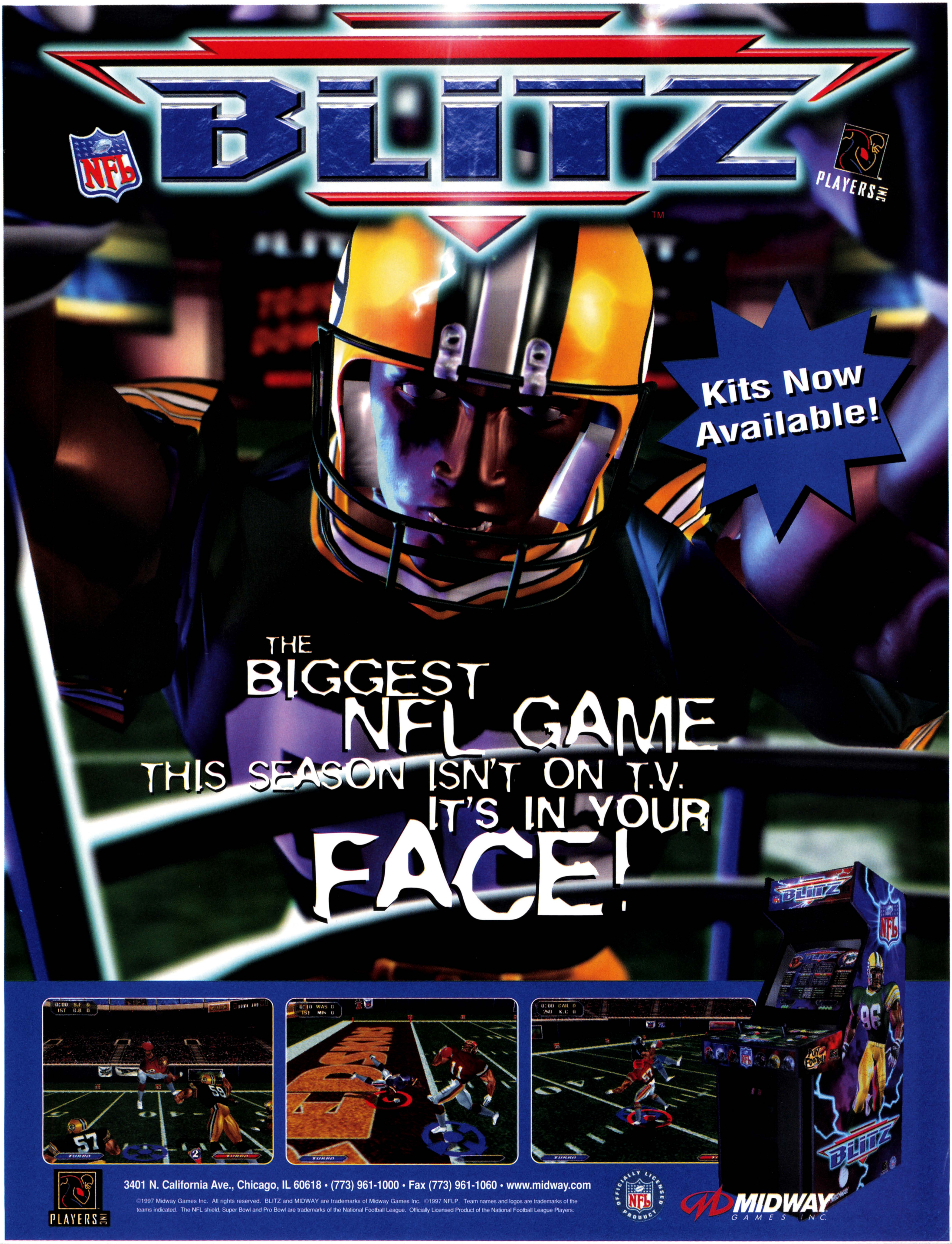
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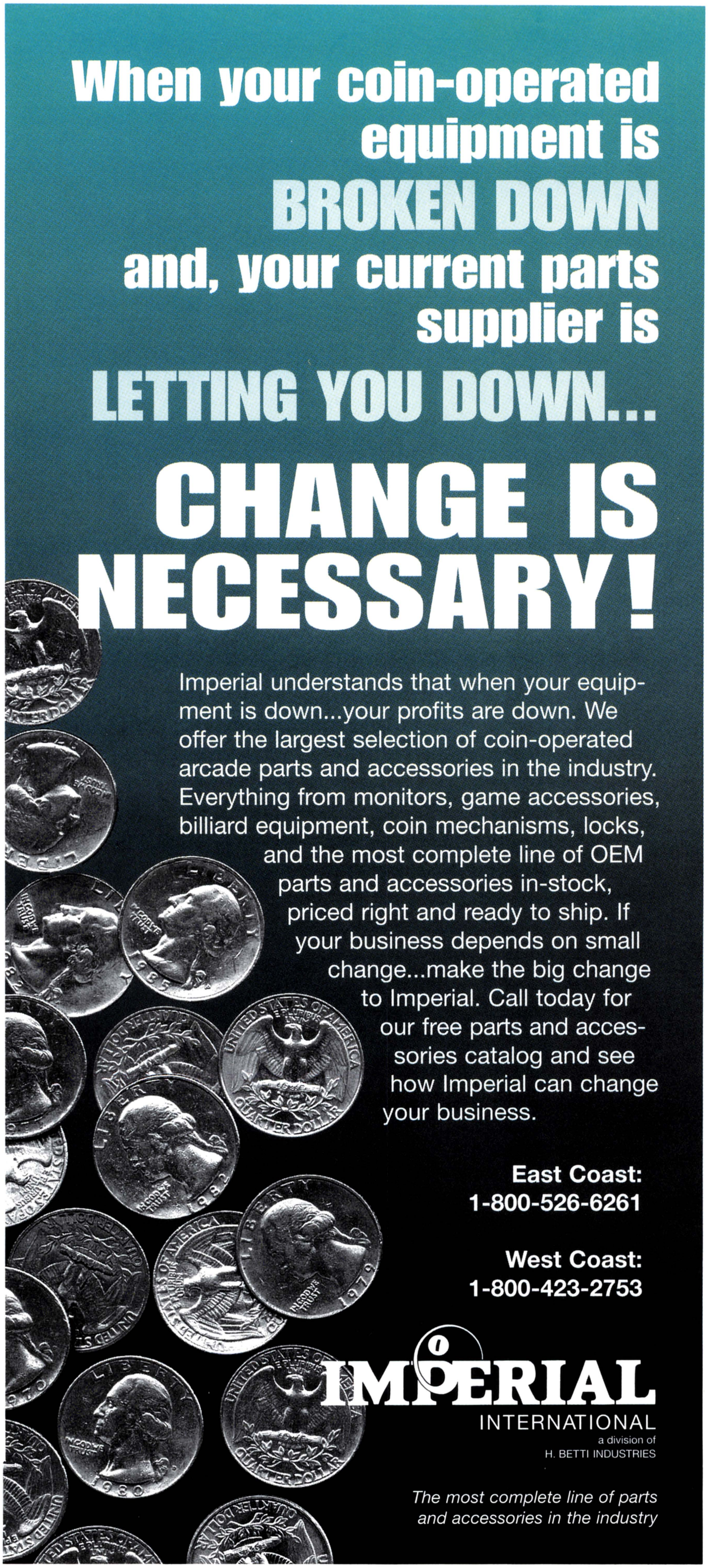

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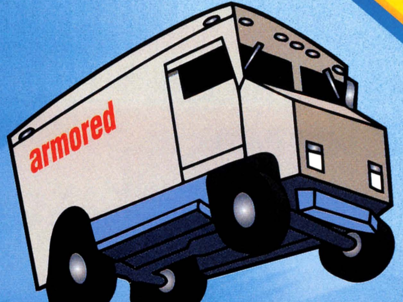

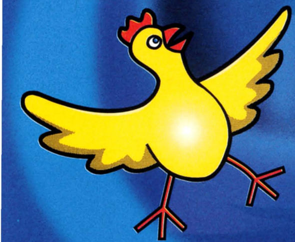

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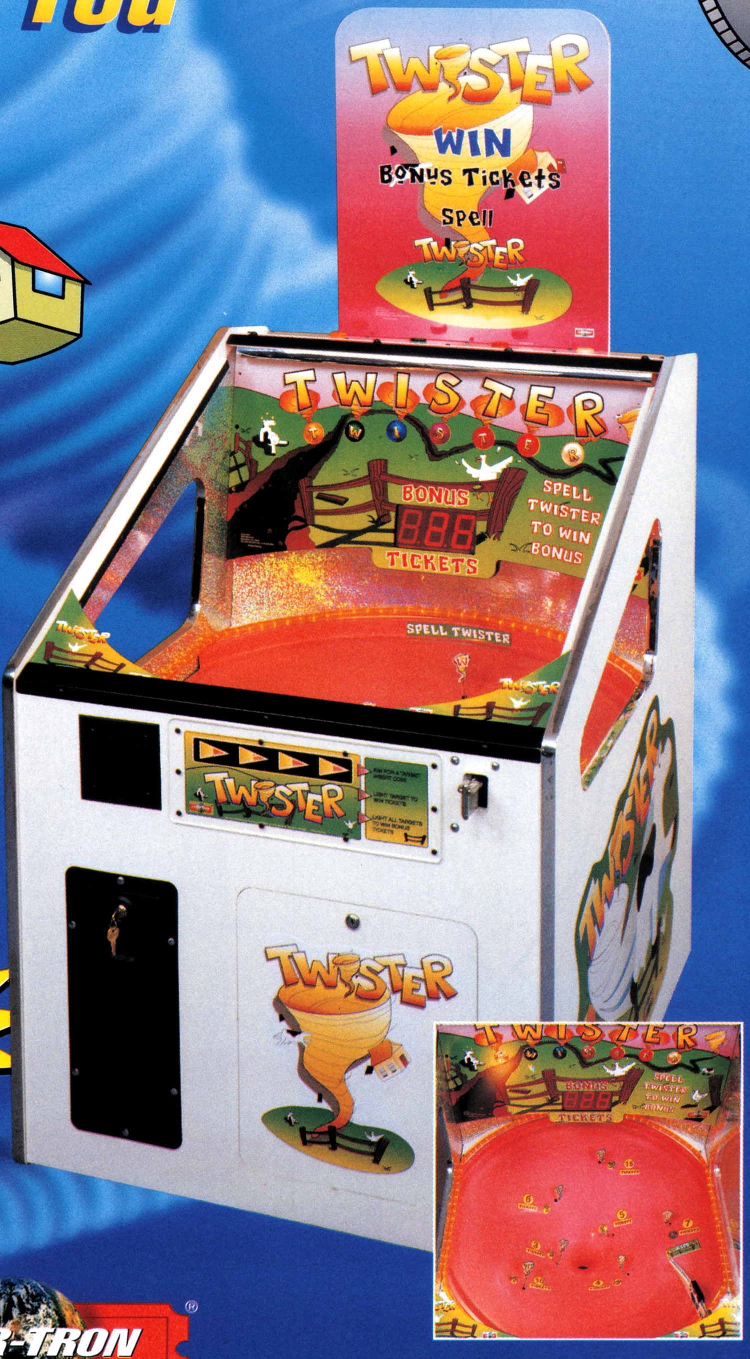
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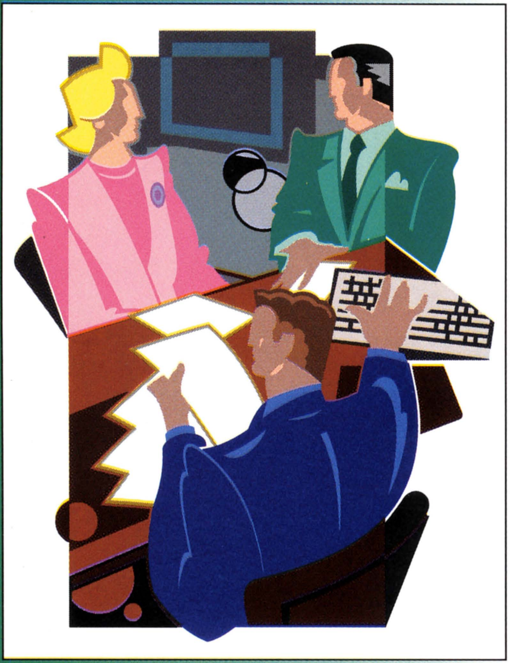

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Premier Data helps you harness new technology and make it work for you with a selection of software solutions specifically designed for the demands of the coin-op entertainment industry. Literally coming at you from the depths of a computer are Premier Data staff, back row, (l-r): Al Gietl, Uzay Togay, Kurtulus Izzetoglu, and Jennifer Sprinkle; front row, (l-r): Kim DeStasio, Don Waldron (holding the Super Route Manager flyer), Can Ulker, and Tiffney Moroney.

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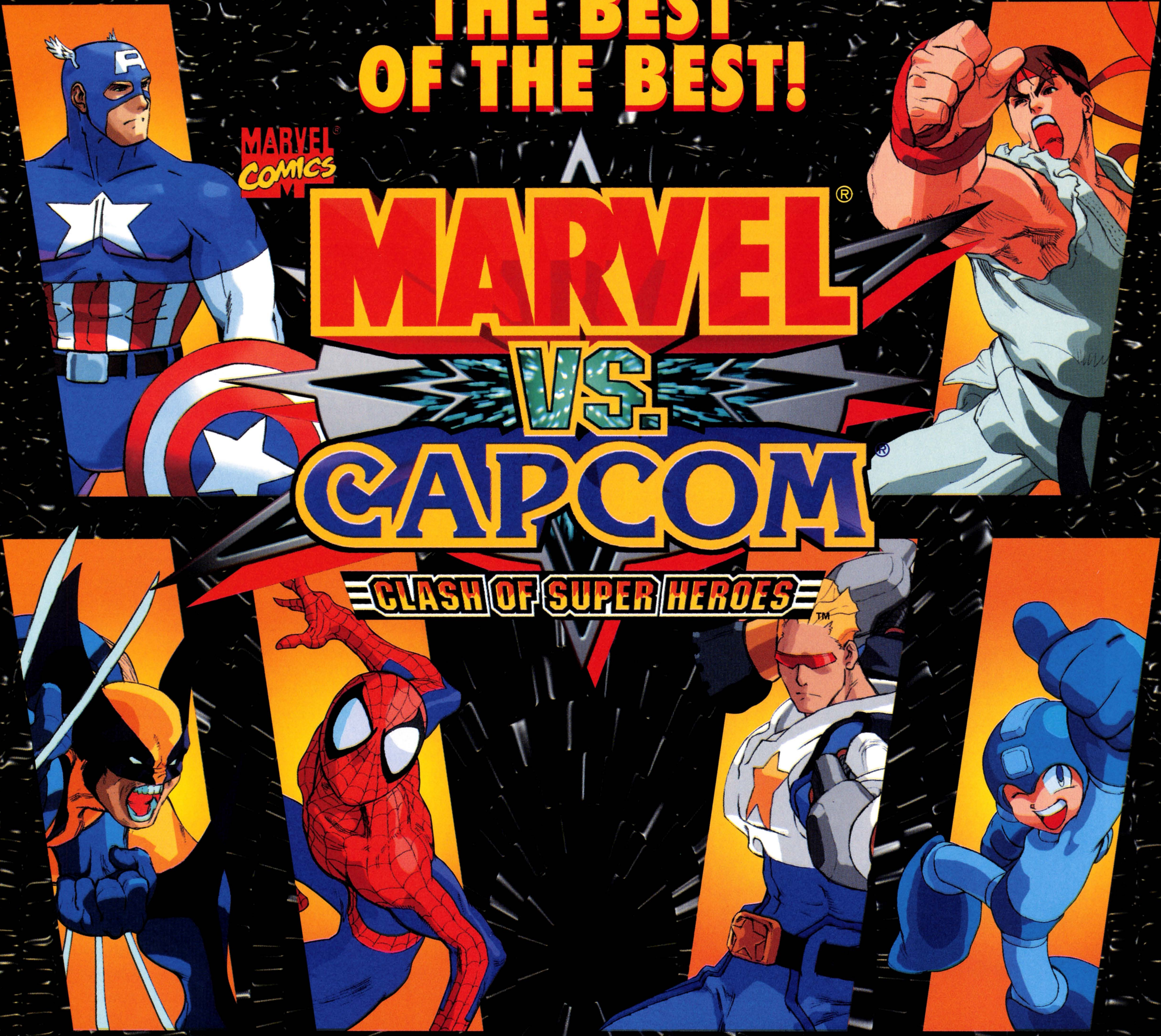

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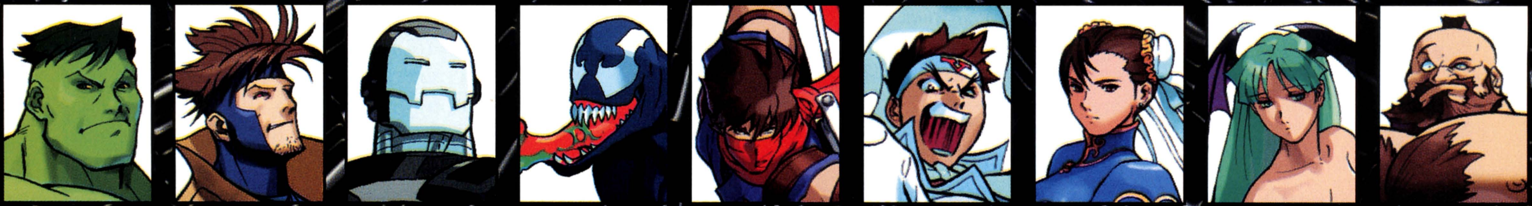

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FROM THE
EDITOR

Some informative reading inside

Our February issue has traditionally been reserved for articles focusing on tax updates and management, coinciding with the season for filing taxes. We have all of that in this issue, chock full of useful tax tips and an exceptional management article. But there's more. There's an article that should not be missed concerning violence in video games.

First, a note about tax and management-related subjects. As we began working on an article outlining income forecasting, the depreciation method preferred by operators, we found out that there could be snags ahead brought about by new tax laws. In a nutshell, in the past operators were forced to depreciate their video games over a period of five to seven years, laughable considering the useful lifespan is often a year or less. But there was little choice. In 1993, then president of AMOA Craig Johnson used his own company to obtain a private letter ruling deeming income forecasting a viable alternative. It's been considered a major victory for operators, and in the four years since some operators have adopted income forecasting.

Valerie Cognevich
Editor

However, when new tax laws were approved last year, there was a question as to whether video games could still be depreciated using the income forecasting method. Although Johnson's company received the private letter ruling, in reality it only covered his company. Others used the ruling as a tool to defend their use of the depreciation method.

Several operators recently have been told by their CPAs that it is questionable whether video games can actually be included. They are not mentioned specifically in the paragraph about income forecasting casting a long shadow across its future in the industry. This doubt has caused AMOA to spring into action, calling meetings and burning up the phone lines with conference calls. At presstime, the discussions were just beginning so we can't give you a rosy picture of how this will pan out. However, we have given you a summary of how income forecasting works, repeated how it has been possibly the only fair way to depreciate video games, and we've assembled some insight from AMOA's president Don Hesch looking into the concerns about income forecasting.

The other article I mentioned on video game violence explores this age-old topic. It's one that's been around since video games became a household phrase and Exidy's *Death Race* in the mid-'70s was fodder for newspaper headlines. *Death Race* challenged players to run down pedestrians and a cross would appear where the citizen was hit. But it was very crude, black and white images that drew ire in 1976. The foes of violence in those days are probably more shocked than we can imagine about the graphic images of today leaving nothing to the imagination as spines are ripped from lifeless enemies on the screen.

Video game violence has generated heated arguments on both sides of the controversy, from "Violent games are in high demand by players" to "The violence in video games is creating a crop of kids with no consciences." But no matter where your own thoughts fall between these two extremes, it's a fact that lawmakers have strong opinions and influence on the final outcome. Lobbyist John Chwat has followed the subject in Washington and was able to sit down with Sen. Herbert Kohl (D-Wisc.) to find out how lawmakers view this sensitive subject. Kohl and Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) held a press conference in Washington last November to talk about the violence. We've also printed Sen. Lieberman's speech from that conference. His candid comments strike a chord as he relates his disgust in the gory, grotesque, graphic violence kids are seeing every day.

We posed a question to our readers in our most recent State of the Industry survey: "Are you concerned that the government will intervene with its own rating system if the industry doesn't do it themselves?" Roughly half said they were concerned about this. As Kohl tells us in this thought-provoking interview, he believes that the industry has been doing a good job, but it's clear that he wouldn't hesitate to step in if the industry fails to continue the progress. He admitted that there is a difference between home games and those found outside the home, but you might be a bit surprised why. Don't pass up this article. I think it's in our best interest to understand the mindset of those holding our future in their hands. ▲

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MAILBOX

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

For many years manufacturers and distributors of coin-operated equipment have been listening to operators "singing the blues." Equipment prices are too high, finance rates are too high, depreciation is ridiculous, not enough equipment on the market, etc., etc., etc. The list goes on, with many operators pointing the finger at everyone but themselves.

In the first quarter of 1997, four major trade publications: *Play Meter* and *Street Beat* in February and *Vending Times* and *RePlay* in March reported on a gentleman from Iowa named Walter Day and his company Twin Galaxies. Mr. Day was the assistant editor in charge of video game scores for the U.S. edition of the Guinness Book of World Records. He had announced plans for a Video Game & Pinball Masters Tournament to be held for the United States and Canada.

For $175 operators were sent promotional materials, score cards, posters, entry forms, and a toll-free number to call in the scores and check the standings on an hourly basis. Eight arcades in the United States participated. Yes, only eight! This pure lack of operator interest is helping to dismantle this industry.

Power Play Amusements decided to roll the dice and selected one of our arcades, Cool World Family Fun Center, located in Wilmington, N.C., to hold the tournament. We decided to charge a $5 entry fee with the players paying for their own games during the competition. We also elected to donate the entry fees to our favorite charity which enabled us to obtain free advertising from radio and television stations in our area. Radio stations announced this as a Public Service Announcement for one week prior to the tournament. TV crews arrived on the day of the tournament and filmed players in heated competition.

For a mere $175 investment, we had TV and radio spots, a full parking lot, and the eyes of Wilmington on us. We even made the 6 P.M. news! Several players even found our Web page and drove over 300 miles to compete. How much press can you purchase for $175? Any way you analyze this promotion, we turned out to be the real winners.

Tournaments and promotions should be an ongoing activity for any arcade doing business today. Cool World Family Fun Center hired a new arcade manager named Leo Daniels. He's a diehard game player whose reputation proceeds him. He has held dozens of different world records on arcade games including a 48 hour and 10 minute run on *Asteroids*. Needless to say, he was not a welcome sight at many arcades as a teenager. One quarter could last all day!

Tournaments are run by Leo four nights a week at Cool World and have resulted in a definite increase in revenue. When the kids go back to school in the fall, our poorest revenue generating period begins. Not so this year. We are way up. Game related merchandise such as T-shirts, posters, etc. are available from some manufacturers. Sega GameWorks even sent out a catalog with tons of game paraphernalia. Kids love this type of merchandise and it can be awarded as prizes for tournament winners or used at your redemption center. This is advertising for all of us.

Arcade operators in today's market must get involved in order to get their customers involved. The popularity of your arcade is in your own hands. There is spectacular product available that will generate real excitement for today's game players. Get with the program. Promote! Promote! Promote!

For information regarding the upcoming 1998 Video Game & Pinball Masters Tournament, contact Walter Day at (515)472-3882.

Steven Siegel
Power Play Amusements
Wilmington, NC

[Editor's note: Steven's experience may sound just a little too good to be true—for a mere $175 his company got a lot of advertising and publicity. But it's a true story. Steven cannot believe that operators would look at an opportunity like this one and simply pass it up while at the same time moaning about how bad business is. This isn't the first and it won't be the last time that operators don't look beyond the horizon of an idea. Yes, it's too bad. Our industry is a critical group, too often willing to let an idea pass them by rather than take a chance. We see that attitude concerning other things like leasing games or the Intel proposal. Sometimes you just have to be willing to give an idea the consideration it deserves.]

A SMILE WORKS WONDERS

When people walk into an entertainment center they just go in to have a good time. In doing so a lot of them have to deal with the people working in these centers, not just the change machines. From personal experience I have learned that a greeting, sometimes asking a customer how they are doing or if everything's all right, and an occasional smile make the visit to the center more enjoyable. Many centers I've visited lacked the personal touch. The place I frequent the most is the place that has employees that greet me with a smile and a friendly "How are you doing?" This place is also usually packed with customers with smiles. When it comes down to it, isn't it all about repeat business?

Robert Rendon
Houston, TX

[Editor's note: Robert, you couldn't have said it better. As a customer you are keenly aware of the difference the employees can make to a location's success. There have been numerous seminars at trade shows emphasizing that sometimes a person's experience is less important than his personality when it comes to dealing with the public. Unfortunately, some employers emphasize the mechanics of the job and put far too little value on the emotional needs of customers through the employees. Yes, it's true that many family entertainment centers hire teenagers and all the nuances that go along with those hires. And they use that as a reason the needs of the customers are not always met with satisfaction. It's not a reason, it's an excuse that should not be tolerated. The successful locations are ones that don't try to buy a Lincoln with a Volkswagen budget. In other words, to keep customers coming back, budget for the Lincolns out there even if it means cutting back elsewhere in areas not affecting your customers' visit.] ▲

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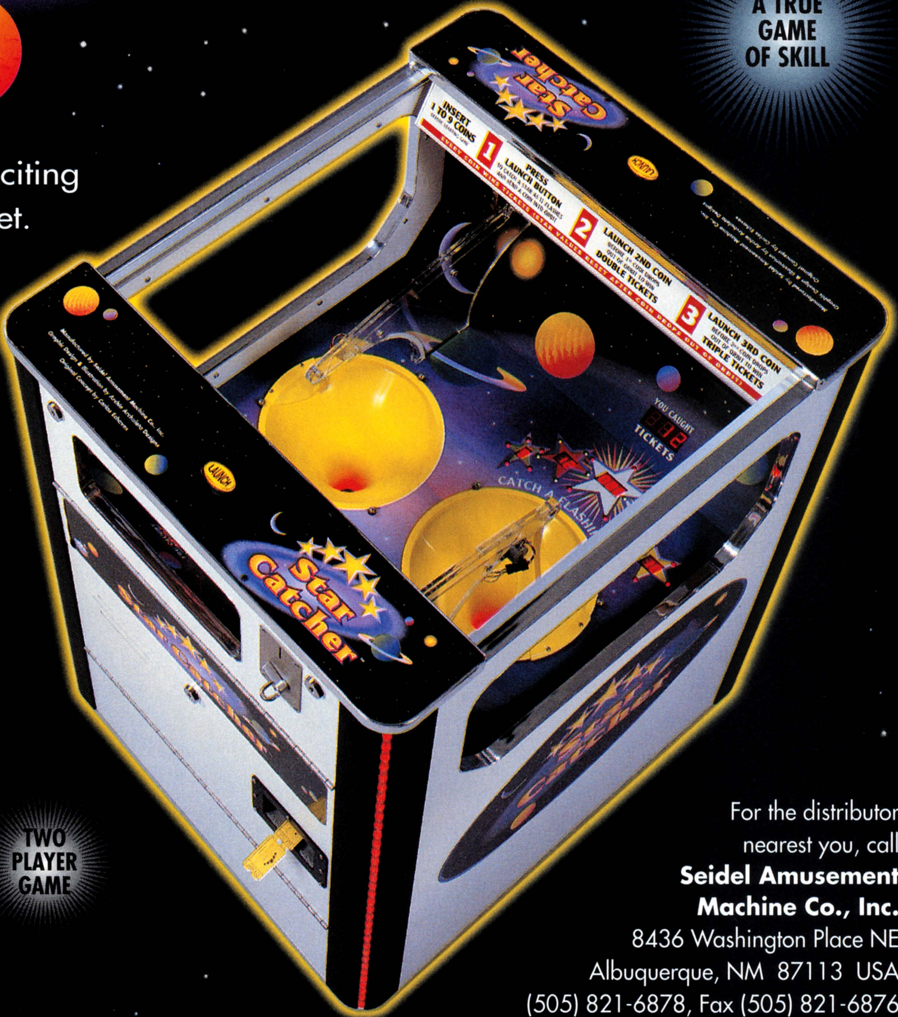
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VIDEO KITS

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. NFL Blitz *(Midway)*	8.73	113	27.11
2. Tekken 3 *(Namco)*	8.32	484	52.41
3. Golden Tee '97 *(Incred. Tech.)*	8.09	361	45.78
4. Area 51 *(Atari)*	7.68	1318	69.28
5. Golden Tee 3D Golf *(Incred. Tech)*	7.53	1203	44.58
6. Police Trainer *(P&P)*	7.35	391	53.01
7. Marvel Heroes vs SF *(Capcom)*	7.23	148	28.92
8. Point Blank *(Namco)*	6.79	645	8.43
9. Bust-A-Move Again *(Taito)*	6.67	519	9.04
10. Strikers 1945 Part 2 *(Worldwide)*	6.64	33	6.63
11. Die Hard Arcade *(Sega)*	6.40	422	37.95
12. Shock Troopers *(SNK)*	6.36	3	8.43
13. Beastorizer *(Namco)*	6.33	*	7.23
14. X-Men vs. Street Fighter *(Capcom)*	6.32	320	42.77
15. Tekken 2 *(Namco)*	6.28	1037	44.58
16. World Class Bowling *(Incred. Tech.)*	6.25	335	19.28
17. Three *(Capcom)*	6.21	89	14.46
18. Metal Slug *(SNK)*	6.15	418	37.35
19. Lethal Enforcers *(Konami)*	6.09	1618	48.80
20. Aero Fighters 3 *(SNK)*	6.05	65	12.05
21. Strikers 1945 *(Worldwide)*	6.00	150	21.08
22. Marvel Super Heroes *(Capcom)*	5.93	382	32.53
23. Raiden II *(Fabtek)*	5.92	785	30.12
24. Raiden Fighters *(Fabtek)*	5.89	107	11.45
25. Raiden DX *(Fabtek)*	5.83	346	21.08
26. Mace: Dark Age *(Atari)--tie*	5.80	454	12.05
26. Bust-A-Move *(SNK)--tie*	5.80	483	50.60
26. Maximum Hangtime *(Midway)--tie*	5.80	45	29.52
27. Vampire Savior *(Capcom)*	5.69	*	9.64
28. Tournament Solitaire *(Dynamo)*	5.67	628	7.23

COUNTERTOPS

1. Megatouch XL *(Merit)*	8.80	514	39.76
2. Megatouch 5 *(Merit)*	8.40	210	25.90
3. Megatouch Tournament *(Merit)*	7.92	656	7.83
4. Megatouch IV *(Merit)*	7.63	1043	39.16
5. Touchmaster *(Williams)*	7.30	601	13.86
6. Megatouch *(Merit)*	6.67	977	23.49
7. Concorde 1 *(JVL)*	6.60	155	9.04

CLASSIC VIDEOS

1. Out Run *(Sega)*	6.35	52	40.96
2. Ms. Pac-Man *(Bally/Midway)*	6.21	*	69.28
3. Galaga *(Bally/Midway)*	6.12	*	50.60
4. Pole Position *(Atari)*	5.80	*	39.16
5. Raiden *(Fabtek)*	5.66	*	22.89
6. Centipede *(Atari)*	5.42	*	43.37

VIDEO DEDICATED

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. House of the Dead *(Sega)*	8.45	405	18.67
2. Tourn. 3D Golf *(Incred. Tech)*	7.88	533	24.70
3. Gun Blade NY *(Sega)*	7.63	743	11.45
4. Maximum Force *(Atari)*	7.61	414	49.40
5. Mortal Kombat 4 *(Midway)*	7.25	150	33.13
6. Virtua Cop 2 *(Sega)*	6.62	900	17.47
7. Time Crisis *(Namco)*	6.54	948	15.66
8. Solitaire Challenge *(Dynamo)*	6.46	1439	14.46
9. Rampage World Tour *(Midway)*	6.37	80	18.07
10. Virtual On *(Sega)*	6.31	129	9.64
11. Virtua Fighter 3 *(Sega)*	6.19	154	9.64
12. Virtua Fighter 2 *(Sega)*	5.53	930	18.07
13. Killer Instinct 2 *(Midway)*	5.46	305	42.77

VIDEO SIMULATORS

1. Top Skater *(Sega)*	9.69	358	9.64
2. The Lost World: J. Park *(Sega)*	9.13	118	9.64
3. San Francisco Rush: Rock *(Atari)*	9.06	116	20.48
4. Cruis'n World *(Midway)*	8.63	755	54.22
5. Off Road Challenge *(Midway)*	8.21	209	22.89
6. San Francisco Rush *(Atari)*	8.16	658	37.35
7. Wave Runner *(Sega)*	8.00	483	9.04
8. Sega Super GT *(Sega)*	7.94	286	9.64
9. Daytona USA *(Sega)*	7.81	2314	37.35
10. Alpine Racer 2 *(Namco)*	7.79	537	14.46
11. Daytona USA Limited *(Sega)*	7.71	264	12.65
12. Cruis'n USA *(Midway)*	7.64	2158	57.23
13. Alpine Racer *(Namco)*	7.53	1233	9.04
14. Alpine Surfer *(Namco)*	7.22	461	5.42
15. Cyber Cycles *(Namco)*	7.06	954	9.64
16. Tokyo Wars *(Namco)*	6.93	300	9.04
17. Manx TT *(Sega)*	6.52	592	15.06
18. Suzuka 8 Hours 2 *(Namco)--tie*	6.13	1534	13.86
18. Indy 500 Twin *(Sega)--tie*	6.13	497	9.64
19. OutRunners *(Sega)*	6.10	1774	12.65
20. Lucky & Wild *(Namco)*	5.88	1346	14.46
21. Winding Heat *(Konami)*	5.80	184	6.02
22. COPS *(Atari)*	5.53	610	9.04
23. Ridge Racer 2 *(Namco)*	5.46	468	7.83

PINBALLS

1. Medieval Madness *(Williams)*	8.27	262	24.10
2. Attack From Mars *(Bally)*	7.43	1026	31.93
3. X-Files *(Sega)*	7.31	31	7.83
4. The Lost World *(Sega)*	7.10	99	12.05
5. The Addams Family *(Bally)*	6.91	3441	57.23
6. Theatre of Magic *(Bally)*	6.89	1279	37.35
7. Cirqus Voltaire *(Bally)--tie*	6.88	32	10.24
7. Scared Stiff *(Bally)--tie*	6.88	640	25.30
8. Independence Day *(Sega)*	6.85	268	12.05
9. Arabian Nights *(Williams)*	6.78	503	19.28
10. Junk Yard *(Williams)*	6.48	279	15.06
11. Star Trek: TNG *(Williams)*	6.36	1718	41.57
12. Fast Break *(Bally)*	6.35	71	15.66
13. Star Wars Trilogy *(Sega)*	6.25	160	12.05
14. World Cup Soccer *(Bally)*	6.14	1055	30.72

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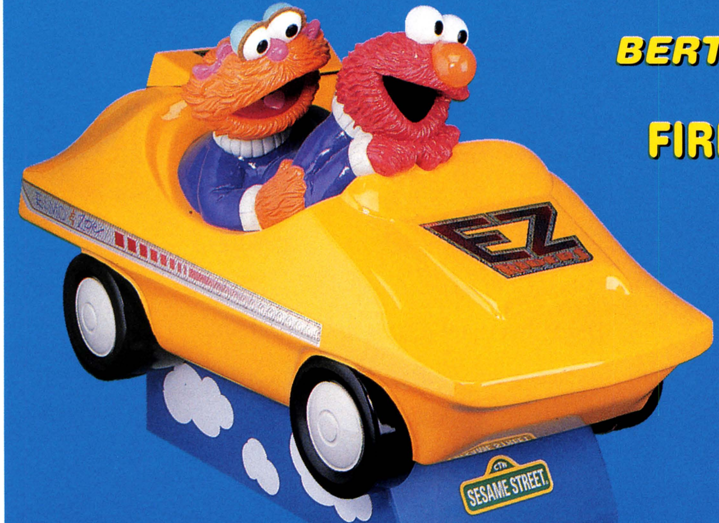

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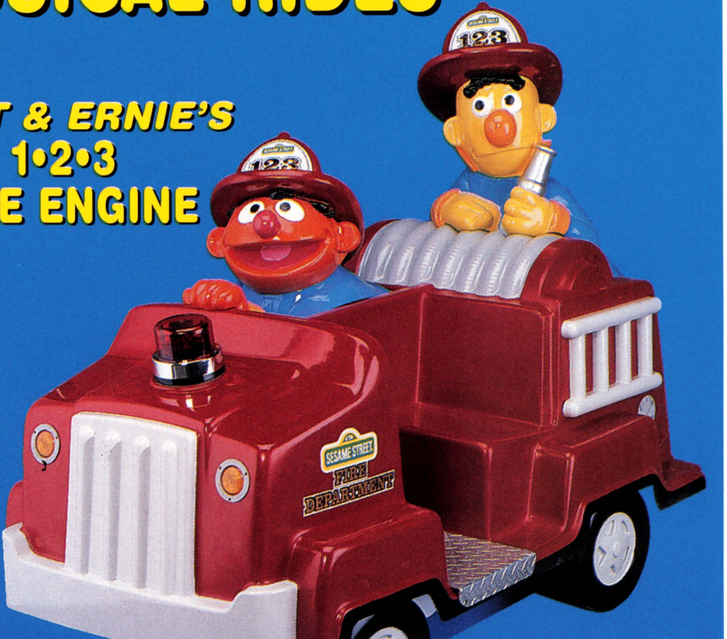

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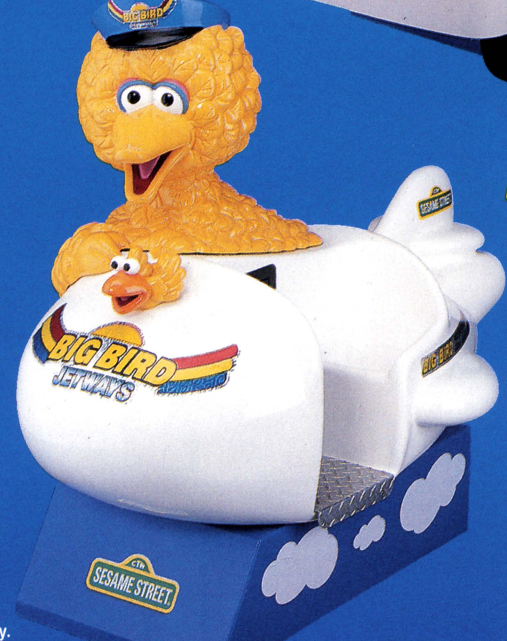

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REDEMPTION

ALLEY BOWLERS

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. Basket Fever *(Bay Tek)*	8.44	277	5.42
2. Bug Bash *(Bay Tek)*	7.45	565	6.63
3. ICE Ball *(ICE)*	7.00	655	9.04
4. Skee-Ball *(Skee-Ball)*	6.48	723	25.30
5. Skee-Ball Lightning *(Skee-Ball)*	6.11	955	5.42

SPORTS GAMES

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. Super Shot *(Skee-Ball)*	7.00	722	5.42
2. Hoop It Up *(Atari)*	6.83	965	17.47
3. Full Court Fever *(ICE)*	6.82	686	6.63
4. Full Court Frenzy *(ICE)*	6.53	427	19.28
5. Shoot to Win *(Smart)*	6.24	597	17.47
6. Hoop Shot *(ICE)*	6.07	216	8.43
7. UB-QB Football *(Skee-Ball)*	5.59	125	16.27

SINGLE CRANES

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. Rainbow *(Rainbow)*	8.82	973	6.63
2. Classic Watch Crane *(Smart)*	7.60	750	6.02
3. Snack Attacker/Challenger *(AGE)*	7.56	611	5.42
4. Clean Sweep *(Smart)*	7.11	970	34.34
5. Action Claw *(Fun Merchants)*	6.60	634	6.02
6. Candy Crane *(Smart)*	6.12	476	34.34
7. Big Choice *(Fun Merchants)*	6.00	696	21.08
8. Jumbo Crane *(Grayhound)*	5.53	681	11.45
9. Skill Crane *(Grayhound)*	5.50	378	13.25
10. Hollywood Crane *(Maxwell)*	5.14	125	12.65

CHILD-SIZE GAMES

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. Shoot To Win! Jr. *(Smart)*	7.00	666	5.42
2. Smart Toss Em *(Smart)*	6.89	611	5.42
3. Feed Big Bertha *(Smart)*	6.12	302	15.06
4. Awesome Toss 'Em *(Lazer-Tron)*	5.44	126	5.42
5. Skee-Toss B.C. *(Skee-Ball)*	5.38	12	7.83
6. Bozo Basketball *(Design Plus)*	5.33	94	5.42

ROLL DOWNS

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. Spin To Win *(Lazer-Tron)*	6.52	836	12.65
2. Clown Roll Down *(Bay Tek)*	5.89	176	10.84
3. Tic-Tac-Toe *(Skee-Ball)*	5.45	46	6.63

NOVELTY

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. Cyclone *(ICE)*	9.03	1521	34.94
2. Colorama *(Bromley)*	8.70	1116	6.02
3. Surfin' Safari *(5 Star)*	8.30	323	6.02
4. Treasure Falls *(Planet Earth)*	8.13	822	9.04
5. Dinoscore *(Planet Earth)*	7.72	1288	21.69
6. Prize Zone *(Lazer-Tron)*	7.11	246	5.42
7. Dump the Ump *(ICE)*	5.89	120	5.42
8. Hop-A-Tic-Tac-Toe *(Data East)*	5.58	46	21.69
9. Hungry Hungry Hippos *(ICE)*	5.00	26	7.83

COIN DROP GAMES

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. Big Haul *(Benchmark)*	8.33	809	21.69
2. Smokin' Token *(Seidel)*	7.89	1256	16.87
3. Wheel 'M In *(Bromley)*	7.52	1179	16.27
4. Cut the Cheese *(Sega)*	6.75	611	7.23
5. Aftershock *(Lazer-Tron)*	6.40	525	12.05
6. Roll For Gold *(Benchmark)*	6.14	370	8.43
7. Rock-N-Bowl *(Bromley)*	6.08	477	23.49
8. Coin Circus *(Sammy USA)*	5.76	252	10.24
9. Home Run Hitter *(CCI)*	5.71	555	12.65
10. Addams Family Values *(Midway)*	5.64	298	6.63

GUN GAMES

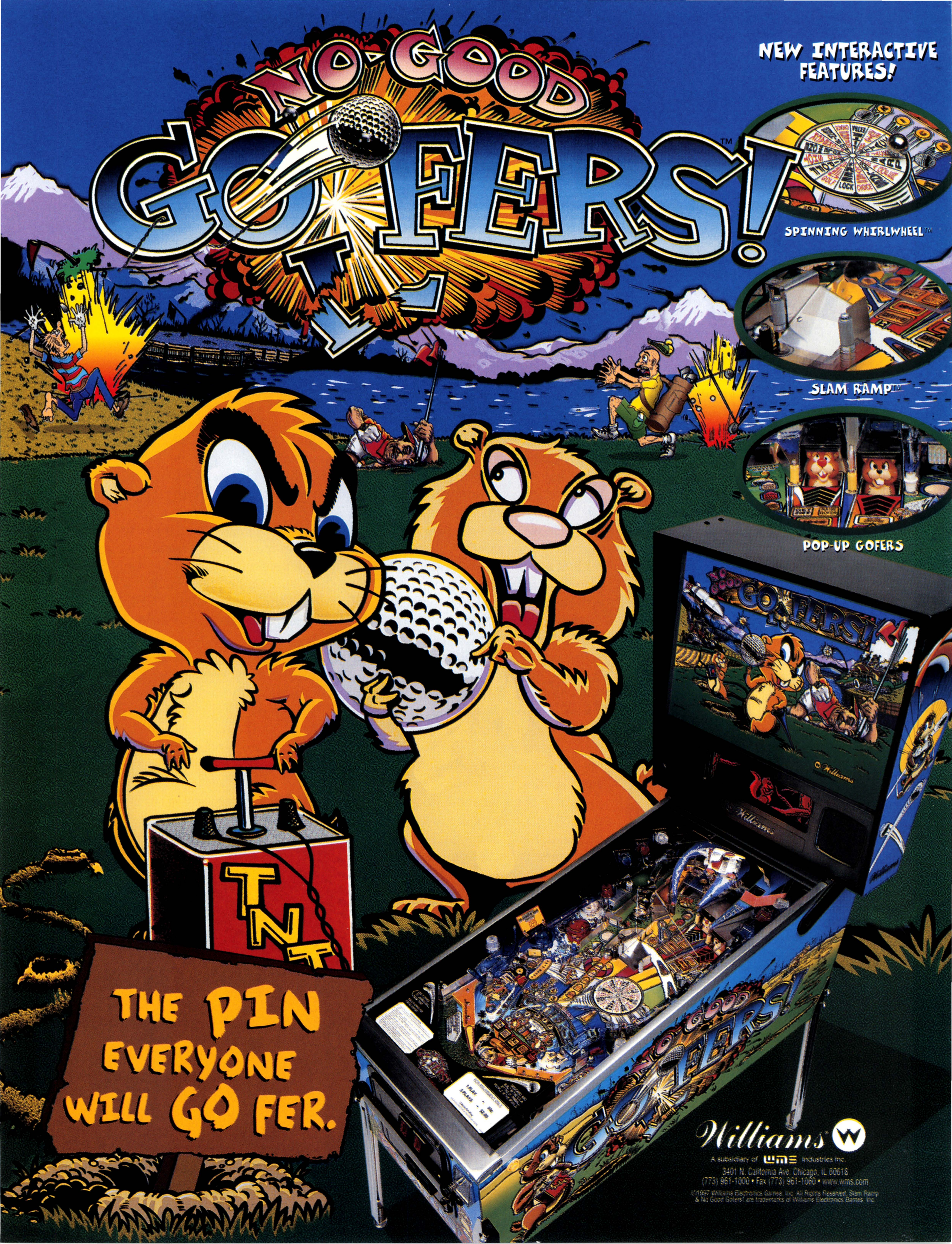
GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. Water Game *(Bob's Space Racers)*	6.89	291	5.42
2. Big Mouth *(Meltec)*	5.61	132	10.84
3. Knock-Down *(Meltec)*	5.00	96	9.04

BOPPING/STOMPING GAMES

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1. Spider Stompin *(Island)*	7.60	1054	9.04
2. Ribbit Racin *(Lazer-Tron)*	6.97	793	17.47
3. Wacky Gator *(Data East)*	6.71	441	22.89
4. Swamp Stomp *(Lazer-Tron)*	6.40	569	6.02
5. Circus Hi-Rise *(Skee-Ball)*	5.56	202	5.42
6. Whac-A-Mole *(Bob's Space Racers)*	5.25	143	9.64
7. Cracky Crab *(Namco)*	5.17	169	7.23

Results are based on monthly Equipment Poll ballot returns. Point Value = average of ballot ratings on a scale of 1-10; Longevity Points = standings on Best 60 combined game lists (#1 game receives 60 points, #2 game receives 59 points, etc.) **Indicates new or reappearing games.*

What is your most popular dart game?
#1 Galaxy by Arachnid
#2 Cougar by Valley
#3 Scorpion by Merit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UP FRONT

EQUIPMENT POLL *surprises* and other *meanderings*

I love reader comments, scribbled in the margins of the Equipment Poll ballot, that give us the benefit of their views on equipment. This line appeared next to the January question asking respondents to name their favorite 8-liner: "None! I hate them all. Please stick to legitimate equipment." (Don't hold anything back; tell us how you really feel!)

However, I would like to discourage the sending of odd materials in the return envelope. Lately I found out it's not safe to open the mail anymore. Not when you are expecting to find an Equipment Poll ballot and instead get an order form and a flyer for videos from a Miami, Fla.,-based company that specializes in pornographic material. Ironically, the envelope also included a complimentary bookmark from the Menninger Clinic about emotional maturity. The postmark on the postage-free Play Meter envelope was "Southeastern, Pa." Could this be a terrible mistake where we got the flyer and the video company got our Equipment Poll ballot? Trade magazines have all the fun, you say, sordid mail and such.

While we're on the subject of the Equipment Poll, let me mention the newly added percentage column that lets you know what percentage of the respondents checked off that product. A well-rated game with a small percentage of response means the game was given very high marks to reach that spot on the poll results. If a game is well-rated and has a high percentage of response, that's significant as well. The percentatge column is designed to put the poll in perspective, just as our longevity points have done all along.

Every now and then we get inquiries about those longevity points. If there are any lingering questions, here's how we arrive at those numbers. We tally two Top 60 lists: one combines video and pinball and one combines all the redemption game categories. The number one game on each of these top 60 lists gets 60 points for that month, the number two game gets 59 points, etc., all the way down to number 60 which gets one point. Games with "legs" stay around long enough to accumulate an impressive amount of longevity points that make it easy to see which are the steady earning titles.

A note of explanation: Recently the coin pusher game category was removed from the poll ballot. Response in this category was not on the same level as other redemption equipment, although the games do quite well. Space is always needed for adding new game titles, therefore coin pushers have been put into a rotation schedule for the monthly question on most popular games not on the ballot. This way, equipment such as jukeboxes, darts, air hockey, and kiddie rides have a chance to be rated. The ballot cannot list every game in every category. A write-in vote space invites readers to rate any older or brand-new titles not on the ballot.

To the Tennessee gentleman who requested earning averages for each machine, that is not possible to include. Many folks do not want to reveal what each game earns, and revenue depends on so many variables. Thanks for your input. And thanks to all of our readers who take the time to fill out the ballot and return it in a timely manner. We need your continued cooperation to produce the best poll in the business. ▲

Bonnie Theard
Managing Editor

Redemption "The Right Way" for AL, AR, FL, GA, NC, & TX

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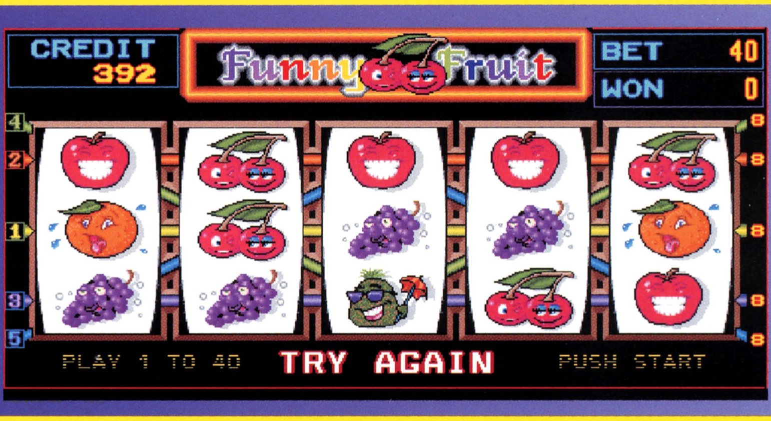
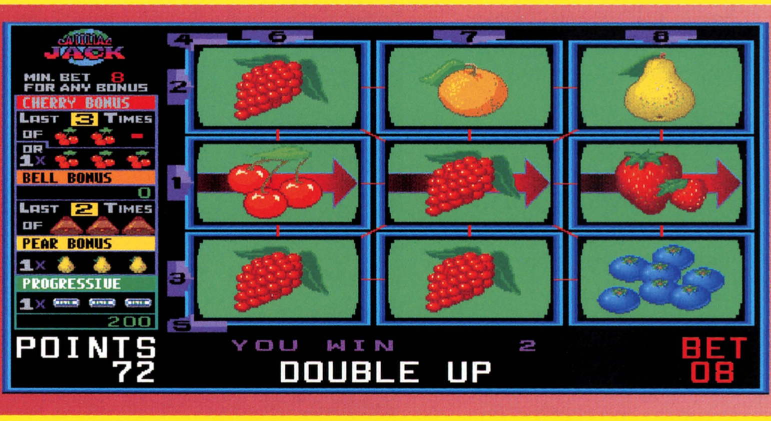

CREDIT
392
Funny Fruit
BET 40
WON 0
PLAY 1 TO 40
TRY AGAIN
PUSH START

TRIPLE PLAY

- Players choose which game they play
- Three choices... Fruits, Animals, or Texas symbols
- Great bonuses and progressive jackpot


CADILLAC JACK
MIN. BET 8
FOR ANY BONUS
CHERRY BONUS
LAST 3 TIMES
OF
OR
1x
BELL BONUS
0
LAST 2 TIMES
OF
PEAR BONUS
1x
PROGRESSIVE
1x
200
POINTS
72
YOU WIN 2
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BET
08

SUPER 97

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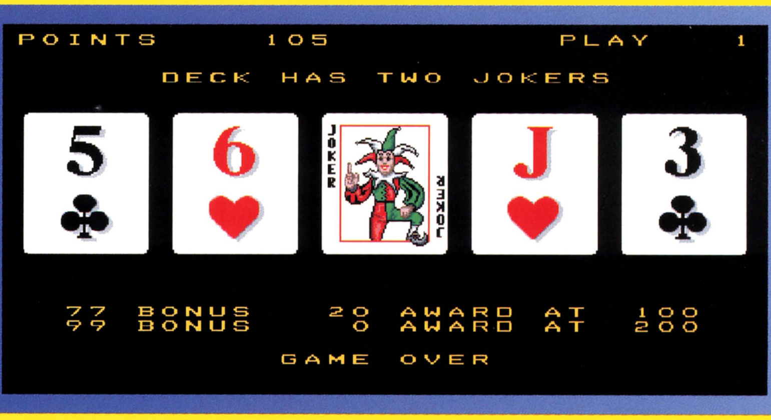
POINTS 105 PLAY 1
DECK HAS TWO JOKERS
5
6
JOKER
J
3
77 BONUS 20 AWARD AT 100
99 BONUS 0 AWARD AT 200
GAME OVER

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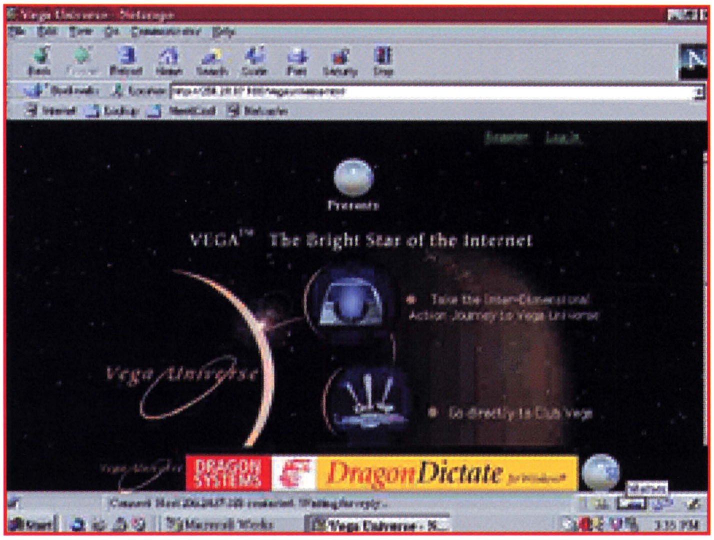
COIN-OP NEWS

Revitalized Service Games Group to launch TV network

Sega S.A. and the Service Games Group, current-day incarnations of Martin Bromley's Service Games company that went on to become Sega Enterprises, recently announced plans to launch Vega Universe: The Game Channel, a free 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week television network dedicated to video and arcade game play. Bromley's daughter Lauran Bromley will serve as president of the arcade games division.

"For the first time in history we will be broadcasting competitors as they play over the World Wide Web with our animated puppet and human characters both commenting on the play and interacting with it," explained Bromley's nephew Michael Singer, president and CEO of Vega Universe. "As a result the show will have a unique and fun feel about it—a combination of `Mystery Science Theatre,' `Beavis and Butthead,' and `Mr. Bill.'"

While Vega Universe: The Game Channel will not be launched until the fall of this year, Sega S.A. and the Service Games Group have finalized a deal with KDOC and all Los Angeles-based cable companies carrying the station to air the new series The Tournament of Champions starting in April.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DragonDictate

Vega Universe's Web site

The live two-hour television show will broadcast every Friday and Saturday for 26 weeks and will feature players from all over the world competing against one another on the latest games for valuable prizes.

Upon its launch, Vega Universe: The Game Channel will become its own network, carrying six hours of programming each day featuring video game shows where viewers actively participate by playing against each other, behind the scene looks at the gaming industry, and animated shows built around popular games.

Programs scheduled for the fall include Amazement Park, Brain Teasers, Funky Challenges, Game Newz, Game Rock, Game World, Laser Quest, Sunday Night Movie, TV Game Classix, Tourney of Champions, Zoo Asked For It, and Zork: The Animated Series.

The network will also offer MTV-style dancing and videos set to the best music from the most popular video games and full-length motion pictures all having to do with games including *Tron, The Last Starfighter, Mortal Kombat,* etc.

Vega Universe has already introduced a World Wide Web site offering games and arcade-style redemption prizes to its audience. The Web site provides an environment for two types of game play over the Internet: uniquely-made, one-of-a-kind arcade-style games and existing CD-ROM games. Players earn credits, which can later be redeemed for valuable prizes and souvenirs.

The site itself is even a game with numerous, challenging puzzles and contests built-in and credits awarded for successfully navigating to its various areas. "This is the first time a redemption-style arcade will be offered on the Internet where players can be awarded credits which can be redeemed for prizes like game CD-ROMs, entertainment videos, Vega Universe merchandise, and much more," continued Singer. "The best part about it is that it's all free."

In a further attempt to broaden its player appeal, Sega S.A. has signed a deal with Disney to install its new, coin-op redemption-style arcade game *Thunder Run* in various arcades across the country. *Thunder Run* is a mechanical game in which miniature cars race each other. The winner receives tickets.

"Signing this deal with Disney shows that the industry has extreme confidence in Sega S.A. Inc.," commented Singer. "With Disney expanding its arcade role, the Service Games Group sees a broader future for its products and is hoping for more deals of this type."

Service Games was originally started by Martin Bromley, who ran an amusement and vending business across the Pacific during World War II. He expanded into Japan after the War and changed the name to Sega Enterprises. While present-day Sega Enterprises is no longer connected to the Service Games Group, Sega S.A. was started by Bromley when the Sega empire first expanded to Europe.

Bromley's daughter Lauran followed in her father's footsteps and currently serves as president of her own company, Bromley Inc., a manufacturer of arcade redemption games. Singer, with the blessing of his uncle, revitalized Service Game, uniting the Bromley arcade business with the popularity of television and the Internet in Vega Universe.

For more information, contact Vega Universe, (310)789-1999; Web site (http://www.vegauniverse.com) or (www.segasa.com).

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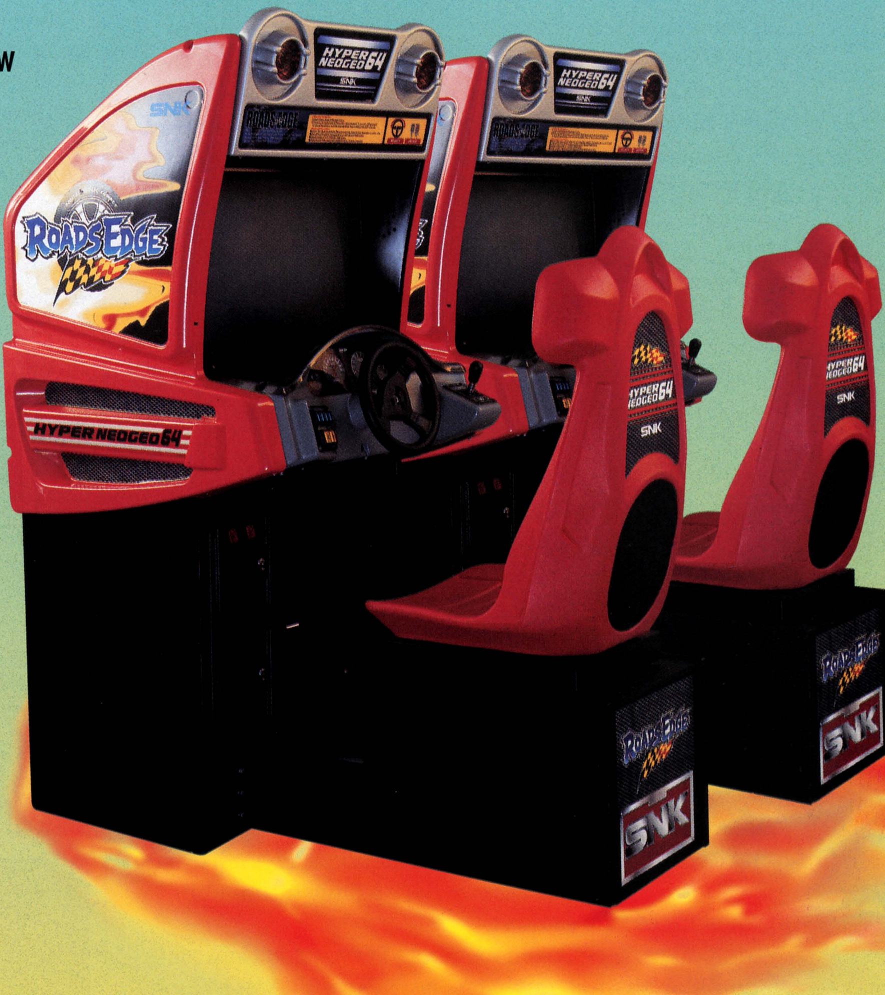

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Tobacco efforts continue on national and state level

Efforts by the Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA) to soften the blow of a potential ban on cigarette vending machines have met with positive response, and the association's Tobacco Committee is planning to hold a forum in Washington, D.C., possibly this month, to raise the issue.

While the industry is pinning its hopes on a Congressionally mandated settlement that would include a payout of $8,000 per vending machine, the association has also retained a Washington law firm to file suit on behalf of individual members against attempts to ban vending machines.

"We had an enormous response from our last mailing and more than 400 companies have signed up for the lawsuit," said Tobacco Committee co-chairman Mark Levine of Melo-Tone Vending in Somerville, Mass.

A proposed settlement reached between tobacco companies and a group of state attorneys general, which is pending before Congress, would ban vending machines altogether. A Tobacco Institute survey, revealing that 70 percent of Americans expect some kind of settlement, indicates that legislation is likely to be forthcoming on the matter.

While AMOA focused much of its attention in the past on saving tobacco vending through the implementation of lockout devices, Levine and others following the issue closely say a ban is all but inevitable. "We need to concentrate more on the possibility of a buyout," Levine said.

The $8,000 per machine buyout figure was arrived at by calculating the cost per unit plus five years average net profits and consideration for lost contracts, dollar bill changers, etc. Any compensation funds not used would be returned to Congress for anti-smoking causes under the current plan.

Operators across the country have also begun mobilizing, and Levine said their help will be needed at the Washington forum tentatively scheduled for sometime in February or March. "It is imperative that we have a large turnout to make our case," he said.

More than three dozen members of the Ohio Coin Machine Association sat down late last year with AMOA lobbyist Wayne Valis to discuss the possibility of a settlement and/or a protracted legal battle. Also on hand was attorney Douglas McFadden, who has been retained to handle any potential suit. For more information, contact AMOA, (800)937-2662; e-mail (amoa@sba.com).

It's a boy!

Fun Expo's Bailey Beeken and her husband David Wilke are the proud parents of a baby boy, Bo August, born Dec. 19, 1997, weighing 8 lbs. 11 ozs. Friends report that mom and baby are doing just fine. Congratulations!

Pinball Expo hits stride at 13 years

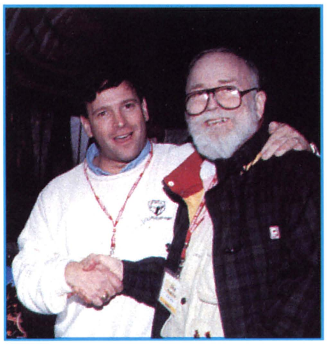
Operators, collectors, designers, and manufacturers of pinball games and related equipment gathered in Rosemont, Ill., for the 13th Pinball Expo in late '97.

In addition to displays of the old and the new in the genre, the Expo also was the occasion for "fireside chats" with Joe Kaminkow of Sega Pinball and Jim Patla of Williams Bally/Midway; a technical session with Tom Cahill of Williams Bally/Midway; an autograph table manned by designers Mark Ritchie and Steve Ritchie and legendary artist Dave Christensen; and a visit to the Williams Bally/Midway factory.

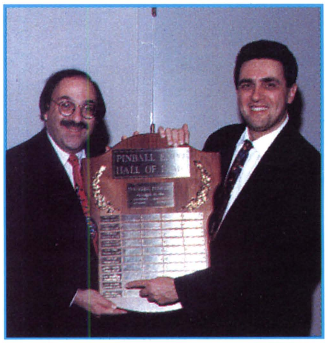
Sega Pinball donated materials to give as prizes, such as a translight from *Twister* that programmer Orin Day held up for the crowd to see. And Williams Bally/Midway designer Pat Lawlor conducted a live quiz show that awarded collectible items as prizes.

Over at the *pinGame journal* booth, where a display titled "The Making of Sega's *Starship Troopers*" was located, Joe Kaminkow announced that the entire production run of the game was dedicated to author and historian Dick Bueschel to honor his contribution to pinball.

Bueschel and Steve Ritchie were named to the Pinball Expo Hall of Fame for '97.



Joe Kaminkow (l) of Sega Pinball with author and historian Dick Bueschel.



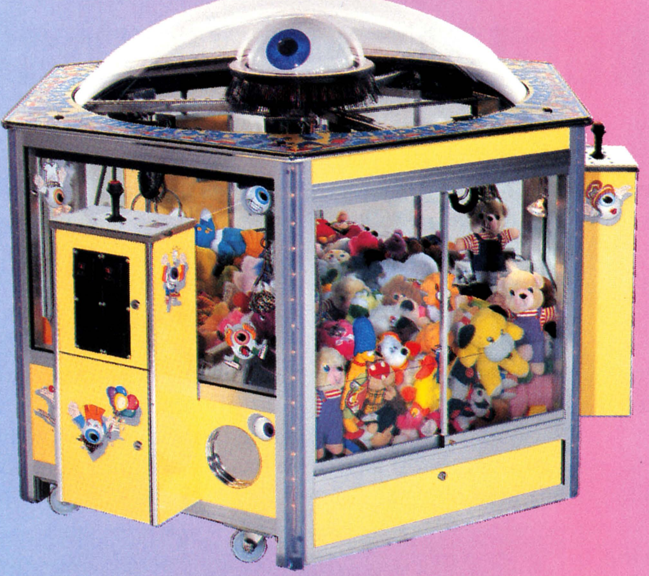
Rob Berk (l) of Pinball Expo and designer Greg Kmiec point to the names of Steve Ritchie and Dick Bueschel on the Hall of Fame plaque.

Bally
NBA
FASTBREAK

Tom Cahill gives a technical tour of Bally's *NBA Fast Break*.

A new lineup for a New Year!

FUN MERCHANTS Cranes



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Valley sets new tournament format

Valley Recreation Products of Bay City, Mich., recently announced the details of its newest promotional tool for dart machine operators, called Ernie's Tourney `98. It replaced the Valley Gold electronic tournaments of previous years with a new format.

"The purpose of these tournaments is to increase operator earnings. The test of any feature or event or prize we considered in building Ernie's Tourney was always, `Will it cause more people to participate and to put more quarters in the operators' machines?'" said vice president of marketing Scott Schroeder.

New features include:

- A, B, and C-level competitions with a host of prizes for winners in all category levels.
- A monthly random drawing called Ernie's Luck `O the Draw.
- Established prizes like shirts and jackets will be complemented by commemorative items such as Ernie's Tourney pins and off-the-bar-wall prizes including different Ernie's T-shirts and even a set of Honest Ernie's own Guaranteed-Bulls-eye-Everytime Darts.
- An array of side events, each offering prizes, will be held in addition to the traditional dart matches. They include: Best Throwing Form, Bad Hair Day Match, an Ernie Look-Alike Contest, and more.
- Posters, machine stickers, billboards, and a six-foot banner to promote the events.
- A national championship in Las Vegas that will also include a Bottomless Pint party and Ernie's Underbelly Tour of Las Vegas (slot machine factory, backstage with showgirls, etc.). The event will be held July 9-11.
- A European championship in Slovenia, where winners from Vegas will travel as Team USA to compete against their European counterparts on Sept. 18-20. In addition to tournament action, there will be a Cricket Crawl of Slovenian pubs and a "Borgaschmorg" dinner.

"It's not just, `Here's a poster to hang up, see you in Las Vegas,'" added Schroeder. "We are trying to fan the player fires with events and activities throughout the dart-playing season."

The events are being managed by Valley tournament director Gregg Elliott and his staff. Elliott strongly recommends all eligible operators to participate in the "heavily subsidized" tournaments. "Why not take advantage of a major benefit of being in the Valley family?" he said. "An operator's investment is nominal and the potential for increased earnings is certain."

Valley distributors across the country are also participating, according to vice president of sales Dave Courington. Each distributor will have booklets, applications, promotional material samples, and full information on hand.

Any Valley operator with 10 machines or more, any model or year, is eligible to participate, and operators who do not meet the minimum are being encouraged to contact Valley or the local Valley distributor.

"We plan on having a little fun with it all ourselves," said Courington. "In fact, word has it that I am a shoe-in for the Ernie Look-Alike Contest."

Lazer-Tron releases new software for *Prize Zone*

Lazer-Tron, the Pleasanton, Calif.,-based redemption game manufacturer, recently announced the release of version 2.0 software for its *Prize Zone* multigame redemption unit.

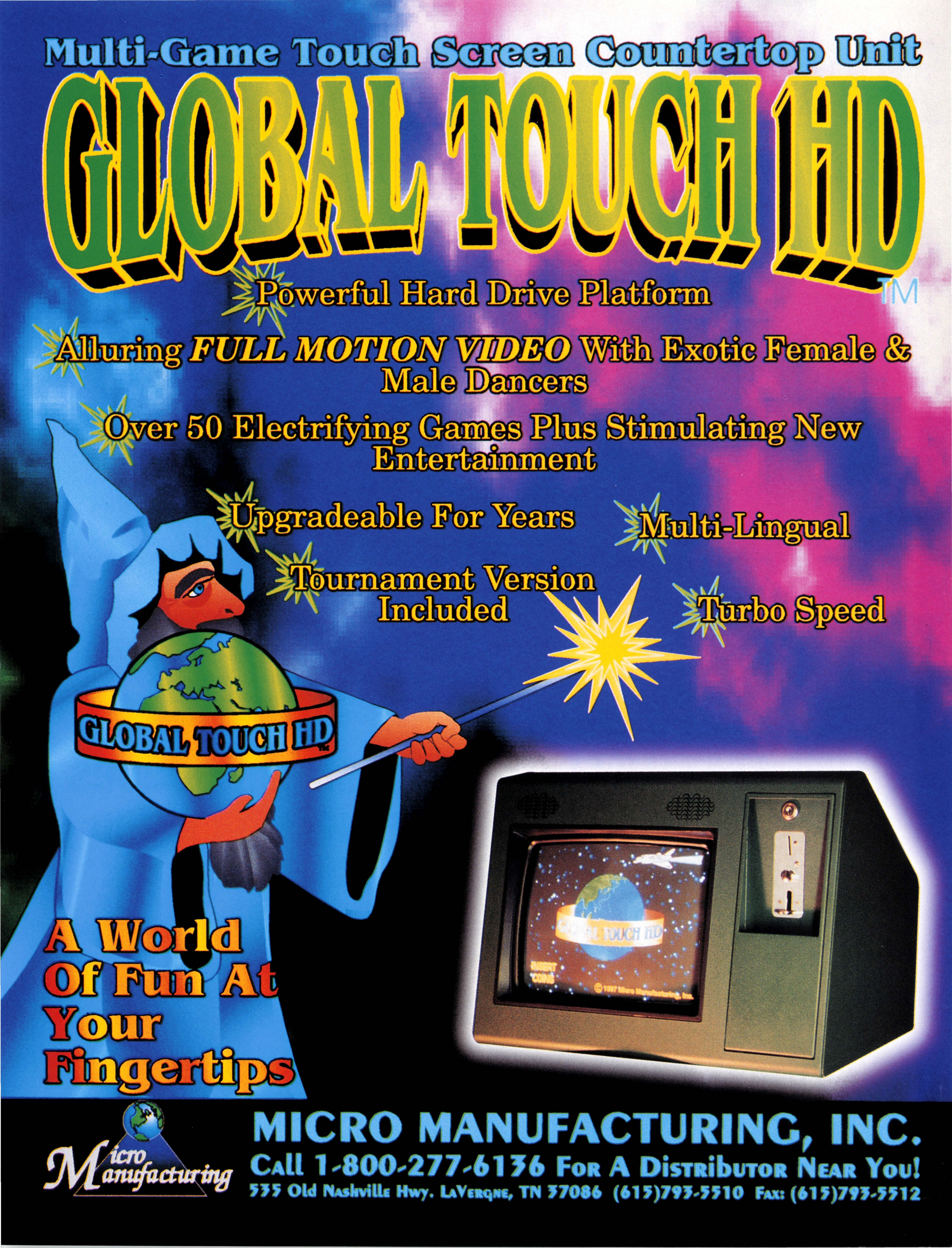
The software features five new games and the exciting new Prize Fulfillment System (PFS) that allows players to win prizes like sporting equipment, Sony Walkman's, TVs, VCRs, and even vacation packages.

Players simply save up their Prize Zone Prize Bucks, fill out an order form, and mail them to Lazer-Tron. The company ships the prize right to the customer. This allows street operators to offer great prize incentives just like a family entertainment center without having to inventory the prizes. For more information, call Lazer-Tron, (510)460-0873; fax (510)460-0365, or keep an eye on the company Web site (http://www.lazertron.com).

RSA's new home

More than 150 skating operators including Roller Skating Association International board members, past presidents, and current members gathered recently when the association held a ribbon cutting ceremony at its new headquarters in Indianapolis, Ind. A representative of the mayor's office and Chamber of Commerce formally welcomed the RSA to Indianapolis, and guests took tours of the building, visited with one another, and met the association staff while enjoying food, prizes, music, and entertainment.

Roller Skating Association
INTERNATIONAL
6905



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California smoking ban goes into effect in 1998

A ban on smoking in bars and taverns went into effect Jan. 1, 1998, in the state of California. However, New Year's revelers across the state paid the law little mind, according to the Associated Press (AP).

The only locations not covered by the law are casinos and bars on Indian reservations and owner-operated businesses with no employees. While the ban makes California's laws the strictest in the nation, enforcement will reportedly depend heavily on self-regulation by location owners or operators.

Fines range from $100 for a first offense up to $7,000 for each violation. Patrons can also be fined by local authorities, the AP reported.

Protesting the law, aimed at protecting employees from second-hand smoke, are Californians for Smokers Rights. "It not only deprives smokers of the right to consume a legal product within a private establishment, but it also takes the right away from the owner of a restaurant or bar...to decide how he or she wants to run their business," a group statement was reported as saying.

Condolences

Sincere sympathy is extended to the family and friends of Edward M. "Ted" Lloyd who passed away Jan. 5. A memorial service was held Jan. 9 at the Shelly Funeral Home in Warrington, Pa., where industry veterans and friends paid their final respects to a great friend.

Ted retired from Rowe International in 1989 and became active in charitable and community activities, especially the American Red Cross.

Rowe executive vice president Joel Friedman recalled fond memories of Ted: "He added his own special touch to our industry. Ted had the unique ability to always present himself in an upbeat and humorous way. He made every sales call and every meeting an event to remember." During his many years at Rowe, Lloyd was affectionately known as Mr. Jukebox.

Lloyd will be sadly missed by all who knew him. Anyone wishing to send a note of sympathy to his family can address it to his daughter, Vicky Weisbrod, 103 Foxhunt Drive, Soudertown, PA 18964.

Adventure Golf expands operations

Adventure Entertainment Corp., formerly known as Adventure Golf & Games, has recently expanded its operations, becoming a branded chain of 21 family entertainment centers in New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Florida, Texas, and Virginia.

The locations include a wide range of attractions including water parks, miniature golf courses, go-kart tracks, and laser tag arenas. Nine of those locations were purchased from Hildebrand Golf & Games Inc. as part of a $48 million transaction.

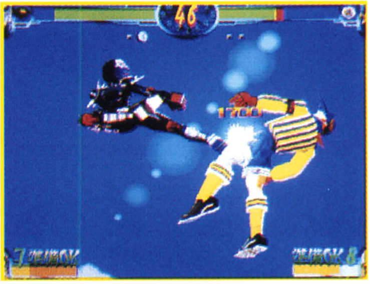
Adventure Entertainment is constructing the five-acre Adventure Landing water park in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Within the framework of that arrangement, Adventure Entertainment also exercised its options to acquire Adventure Landing Inc. and raised growth capital to finance the construction of a five-acre Adventure Landing location in Daytona Beach, Fla.

The Adventure Landing concept includes a highly-interactive water park featuring a 65-foot tall pirate play village complete with 12 water slides and over 200 water effects. Adventure Entertainment hopes to expand the chain to the Midwest, Texas, and the West Coast. Adventure Entertainment was founded in 1979 by Roger Linville and Henry Woodburn.

Capcom introduces new fighting video

Capcom Coin-Op recently announced the release of its newest video kit title, *Rival Schools*, a two-player fighting game developed on the PSX (Sony) platform with all-new characters.



Capcom's *Rival Schools*

The game features 14 of the coolest and toughest kids on the playground, according to Capcom, while providing plenty of depth with multiple story lines and endings.

Game play is rendered in 3D graphics, and new features include unique tag team strategies and moves such as the Burning Vigor Attack and the never-before-seen airborne 3D chain combo. For more information, contact Capcom Coin-Op (408)522-5321; fax (408)522-5331.

StrayLight VR presents product at food show

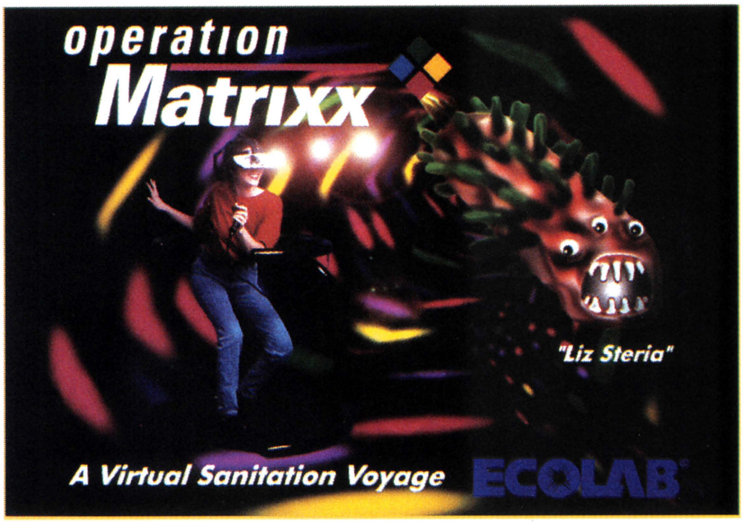
A customized virtual reality (VR) game developed by StrayLight Corp. of Warren, N.J., was used to introduce an important new sanitation product to the dairy industry at last year's high-profile Worldwide Food Expo in Chicago.

Ecolab Inc. hired StrayLight to develop software that would help introduce its next-generation peracid sanitizer Matrixx. The result was a game entitled Operation Matrixx: A Virtual Sanitation Voyage, which utilized StrayLight's 3D-XTC VR platform.

The game challenged players to sanitize a dairy pipeline in less than two minutes, battling evil forces that included Lee Coli, Liz Steria, and Sue D. Monas. Players were awarded a different number of points for each bug killed, based on the microbes' difficulty level to kill in actuality.

As each bug was killed, the Matrixx logo appeared over the doomed bacteria and then exploded across the screen. Four large computer monitors in Ecolab's booth broadcast play action for those waiting in line. The company chose to modify an existing 3D-XTC game, *Cozmik Debris II*, instead of producing a whole new experience.

Cozmik Debris II was designed as a game source or template for corporate promotions, providing tremendous cost savings to potential sponsors faced with developing an entire VR experience.



A customized virtual reality game developed by StrayLight Corp., was used to introduce a new sanitation product from Ecolab Inc.

StrayLight's corporate customers include American Express, AT&T, AVIS, Blockbuster Entertainment, Coca-Cola, Disney Resorts, the Grateful Dead, Hennessy Cognac, Jim Beam Brands, *People* magazine, and Samsung to name just a few. For more information, contact StrayLight Corp., (908)580-0086; fax (908)580-0092; Web site (http://www.strayvr.com).

New demographic report available for FEC operators

The International Association of Family Entertainment Centers and CACI Marketing Systems have produced a family entertainment package designed to aid family and location-based entertainment retailers in site selection and business planning.

This new 14-page report and map package—available for radius rings around street intersections in the country—features nearly 400 different demographic variables along with details on retail spending and neighborhood lifestyles. The report package also includes current-year updates and five-year forecasts about the particular market and 1990 census information.

"We know that a major component in the success of family entertainment centers is a clear understanding of the demographics in their market area," said IAFEC executive director Carole Sjolander. "These reports provide the detailed information that is critical."

IAFEC members can get the report for the special price of $179 for one ring or drivetime; $219 for two rings or drivetimes; and $259 for three rings or drivetimes. For more information, contact CACI, (800)292-2224 or (800)394-3690.

As reported in the November issue of *Play Meter*, IAFEC is also offering the 100-page book "Marketing Your Family Entertainment Center" by Susan Snyder-Davis, the former editor of publications for the Roller Skating Association.

The book, which sells for $65 or $55 for association members, contains practical marketing information and ideas for a wide range of entertainment venues catering to families. To order, contact IAFEC, (603)464-6498; fax (603)464-6497; e-mail (iafecnh@aol.com).

JLO announces new license fees

The Jukebox License Office recently announced the jukebox license fees for 1998, which reflect a 2.2 percent increase over those from the previous year based on the consumer price index.

The new fees are: first jukebox ($318), second through 10th jukebox ($60 each), 11th plus jukebox ($50 each). For more information, contact the Jukebox License Office, (615)320-4000 or (800)955-5853; fax (615)320-4004; e-mail (jukebox@edge.net).

Virtual World lands at Dave & Buster's

Virtual World Entertainment's (VWE) Tesla 4.0 Cockpits have taken a place of prominence at the newest Dave & Buster's location in Denver, Colo. The installation features eight units offering patrons the opportunity to compete against one another in futuristic air combat. Tesla 4.0 Cockpits have also been installed at Dave & Buster's locations in Atlanta, Houston, Chicago, and Cincinnati.

"In addition to being consistent revenue earners, the Tesla 4.0 Cockpits dovetail with our concept of location-based entertainment (LBE)," said Dave & Buster's co-founder Dave Corriveau. "From day one, VWE worked very closely with our architect and designers to ensure a successful attraction."

"Clearly, Dave & Buster's has an excellent concept," said VWE's vice president of business development Ted Keenan. "Recognizing this, we worked very closely with them to fine tune our product to their needs. The effort has paid off."

The unit is an interactive set of cockpits offering as many as eight players a sophisticated, 3D simulation experience. Each cockpit is equipped with high-resolution graphics, surround sound, seven monitors, and a military-style joystick. Two realistic software titles are available, BattleTech and Red Planet, both based on intellectual property owned exclusively by VWE Group.

While Tesla units were previously exclusive to Chicago-based VWE's chain of Virtual World stores, the cockpits have been enjoying a warm reception from LBE operators across the globe. To date, VWE has installed over 150 Tesla cockpits in locations such as Lazer Park in New York City's Times Square; Mountain World in Whistler, British Columbia; Slam City in Los Angeles; and the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in Seattle.

Dave & Buster's opens new location in Denver

Calling it the "smoothest new store launch to date," Dave & Buster's opened its 12th location in the United States in Denver, Colo., late last year to an enthusiastic crowd.

"The opening weekend for Denver was just spectacular," said Dave & Buster's co-founder and co-CEO Buster Corley. "You really have to hand it to our opening team. Our opening weekend sales were among our best ever and we were pleasantly surprised with an average ticket running well over $20 per person."

Located at I-25 and Colorado Blvd., the new Dave & Buster's is the company's third new store in 1997. "The smoothness of the Denver opening just proves we are ready to push forward with our accelerated growth plans for 1998 and beyond," said Dave Corriveau, company co-founder and co-CEO. "In the next 30 months we'll double Dave & Buster's store base to 24 locations in major metropolitan areas across America."

Fun Center Software acquires ARMS International systems

Fishkill, N.Y.,-based Fun Center Software (FCS), a provider of software products for entertainment-based businesses, recently acquired Brick, N.J.,-based ARMS International's Redemption and Point-of-Sale (POS) Software Systems.

FCS, which currently boasts over 300 customers worldwide, said the move was part of an aggressive plan to gain significant market share in the family entertainment center (FEC) industry. In recent months, the company has also introduced several new additions to its core POS package, Fun Center Manager.

ARMS pioneered management software for FECs and has since established a customer base with users throughout the world. "Fun Center Software is dedicated to supporting those customers," said company president Rich Cobb. "We are in a very aggressive growth stage and will continue to meet the needs of the industry by offering innovative products for any size location."

Fun Center Software's products are designed to control all aspects of indoor and outdoor FEC facilities, offering fully integrated features such as one-touch sales, cash and inventory control, event scheduling, and marketing and mailing.

This past September the company introduced Redemption Express, a package designed to allow operators to handle redemption activity with speed and accuracy. For more information, contact Fun Center Software, (914)896-5020; fax (914)897-3729. (For more on management software, see the "Software Update" feature in this issue.)

Atlas Distributing opens new office in Kentucky

Atlas Distributing of Chicago recently announced the opening of its newest branch office in Louisville, Ky. The operation, formerly known as Kentucky Coin, will be run by Steve Pullen, formerly of Kentucky Coin, and Leon Cox, formerly of Atlas Ohio.

Atlas Kentucky is located at 6005 Fern Valley Road, Louisville, Ky., (502)966-5266 or (800)759-2646; fax (502)966-5284.

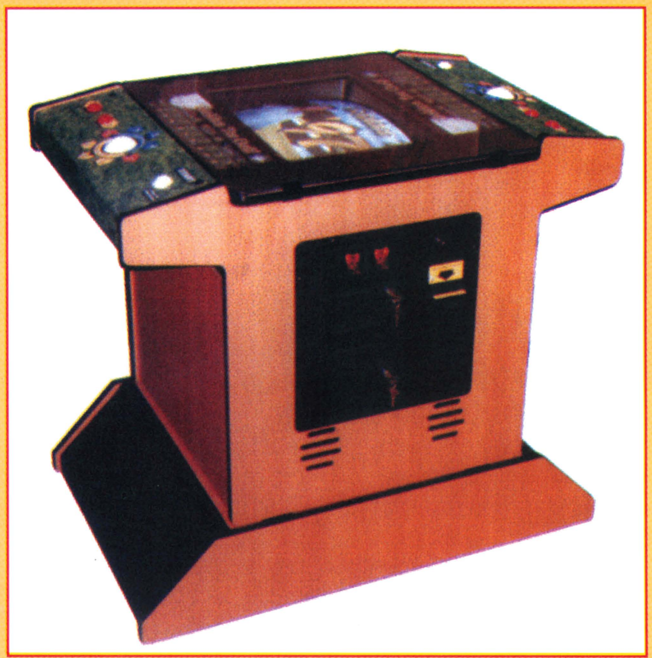
Incredible Technologies revives cocktail cabinet

Rolling Meadows, Ill.,-based video game manufacturer Incredible Technologies is now offering a stylish table cabinet designed for its line of tournament coin-op games. The newly-designed table was created with *Golden Tee 3D Golf* in mind and should appeal to upscale locations as well as ones that cannot fit a larger, upright cabinet.

Sporting a rich wood finish, the cabinet comes with a removable pedestal base to accommodate various height chairs, bar stools, or standing players. Two sets of full-size trackball controls are mounted on opposite sides, allowing players to roll the trackball with no obstructions.

The Incredible Technologies family of video games including *Peter Jacobsen's Golden Tee Golf, World Class Bowling,* and *ShuffleShot* are all available as dedicated cocktail cabinets.

For more information, contact Incredible Technologies, (847)870-7027; fax (847)870-0120; Web site (http://www.itsgames.com); or Bulldog Amusements, (425)869-6400; fax (425)869-6401.



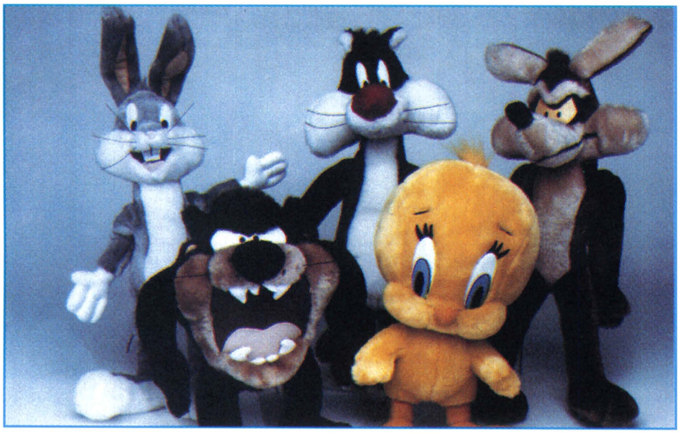
Incredible Technologies is now offering a stylish table cabinet designed for its line of tournament coin-op games.

King Plush packs `em in

King Plush of Carson, Calif., well-known for its crane mixes and redemption merchandise featuring popular licensed plush, is now offering pre-packs with additional characters from Looney Tunes, Warner Bros., Hanna-Barbera, and Disney.

The newest 75-piece pre-pack, named the Featured Licensed Mix, will offer 20 different licensed pieces including Bugs Bunny, Tazmanian Devil, Sylvester the Cat, Wile E. Coyote, Tweety Bird, Porky Pig, Yosemite Sam, Fred Flintstone, Barney, Pink Panther, and Popeye.

This big name plush also comes in big sizes, up to 15 inches, and has an average price of $2.75. For more information, contact King Plush, (800)473-3402; fax (310)834-7905; Web site (http://www.kingplush.com).



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Atari licenses *Surf Planet* from Gaelco

SurfPLANET™
THE DEFINITIVE SNOWBOARDIN' GAME

Atari Games announced last month that it has licensed the snowboarding game *Surf Planet* from Spanish software and hardware developer Gaelco with an eye toward introducing a game that has international appeal.

Available as a JAMMA-compatible universal kit this month, *Surf Planet* combines speed, creativity, precision, and adrenaline, all woven together seamlessly in the unit's game play. *Surf Planet* features four different alpine tracks, rated by level of difficulty. The players' goal is to race down the mountain, passing each checkpoint in order to make it to the finish line before time expires.

In order to keep their snowboard at optimal speed, players must try and snag the "wax" icons as they race down the slope. To liven things up, the terrain is treacherous and packed with exciting jumps, moguls, and stunts. To make sure that the replay value is high, the fourth track is selectable only after players finish the first three courses.

"*Surf Planet* is a perfect choice to round out the game offerings in any location," said Atari's Mary Fujihara. "It's simple, yet very addictive, and appeals to everyone. We licensed this game from Gaelco because the design team understands the coin-op player."

Players who finish the game and set a high score on their local unit will be given a code and invited to post their high score on the *Surf Planet* Web site (http://www.surfplanet.com). An additional feature is the Big Jump Competition, which challenges players to find the best place to make the longest jump in pursuit of the record. For more information, contact Atari Games at (408) 434-3700 for North American inquiries; (408)232-3206 for Asia and South America.

Video Lottery Technologies announces change of name

Video Lottery Technologies (VLT) has changed its name to Powerhouse Technologies in an effort to better represent the broad scope of its technology-based products above and beyond supplying video lottery terminals, the company said.

"The name change is being made because the corporation has simply outgrown the scope of its original name," said VLT president and CEO Richard Haddrill. The company's main operating subsidiaries—AWI, VLC, United Tote, and Sunland Park racetrack—will continue to maintain their identities under the Powerhouse umbrella.

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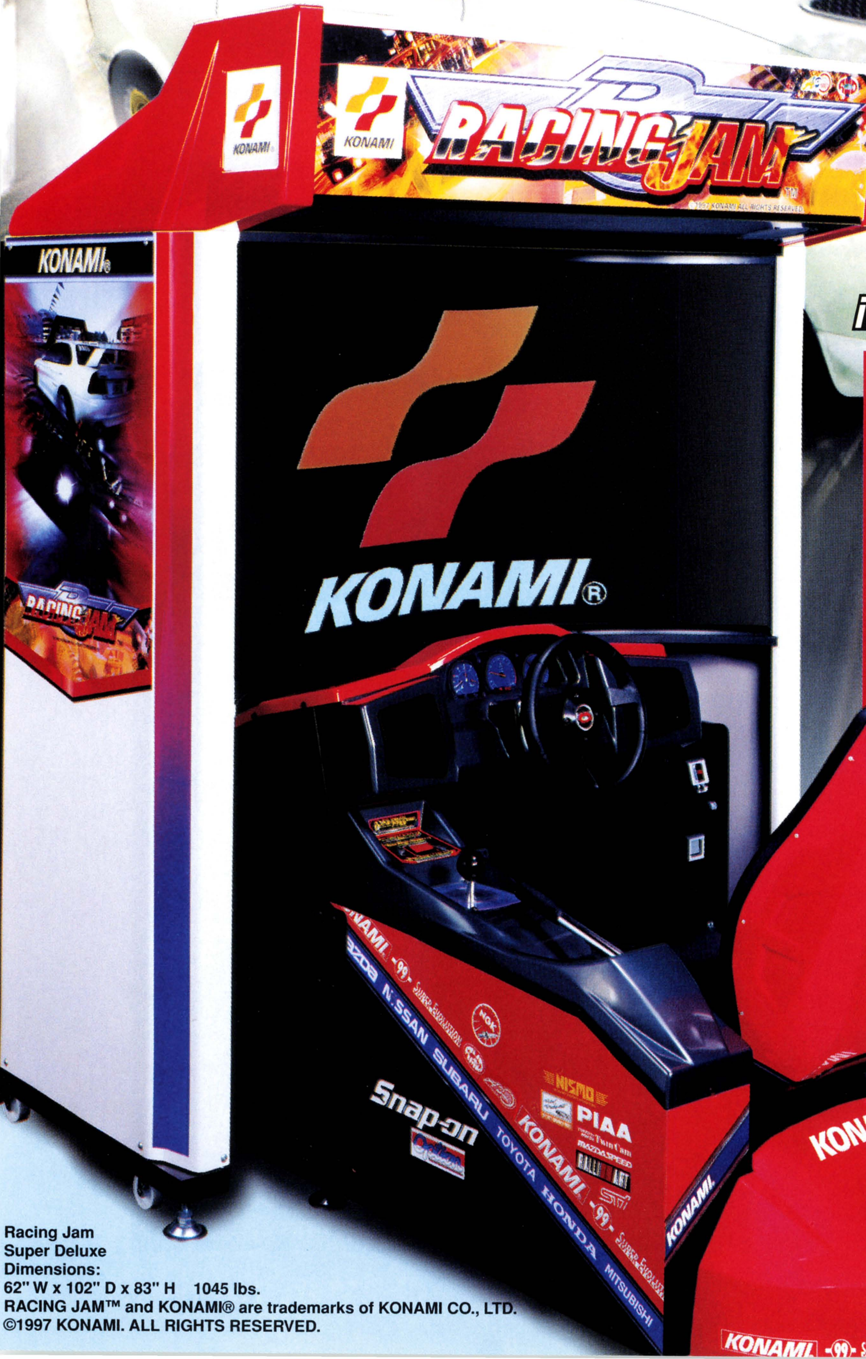
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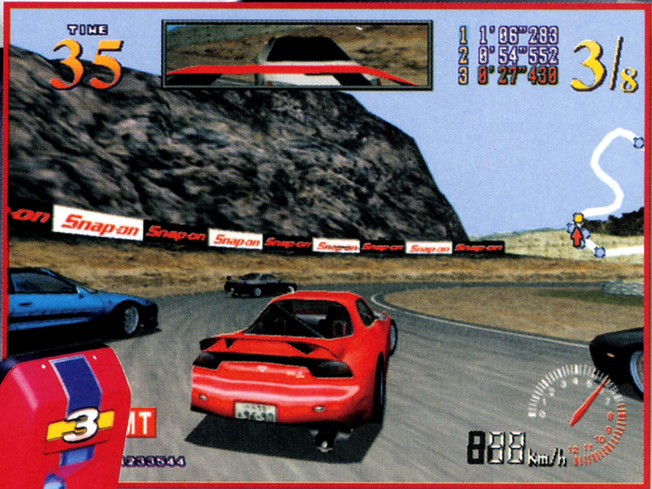
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Racing Jam
Super Deluxe
Dimensions:
62" W x 102" D x 83" H 1045 lbs.

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Software update now available for *Touchmaster*

Midway Games recently began shipping its *Touchmaster 3000*, a major software update for the company's *Touchmaster* multigame countertop unit. The update includes six new games and an innovative Touch Key system that allows operators to set up an access menu that provides locations with more control over the machine's features.

New games include the first adult-themed erotic titles, Erotic Solitaire and Strip Poker, and the first action game, Kick Champion, a soccer-themed title which offers players a wide range of play action choices.

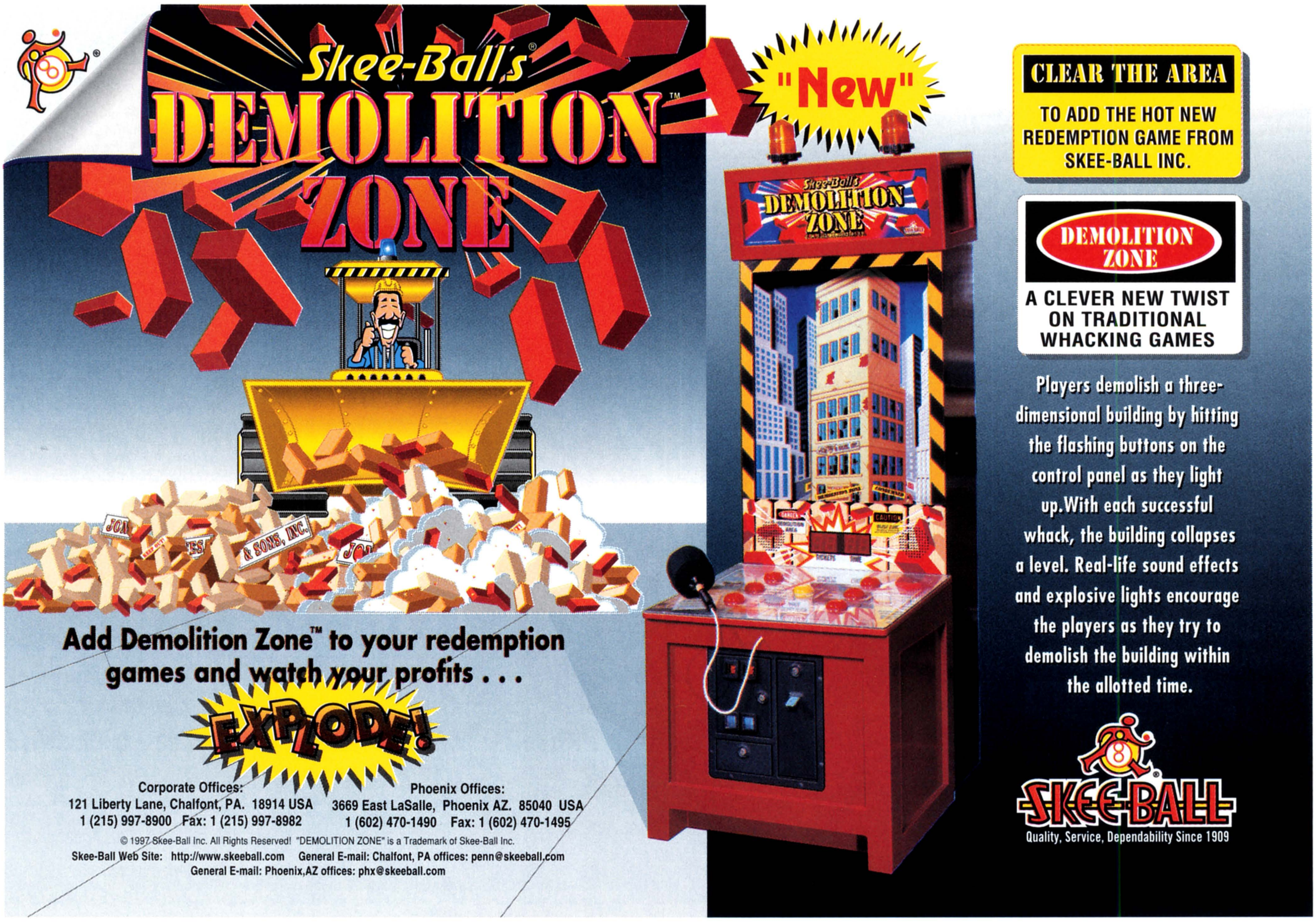
Other new games include Breakout 3000, the first *Touchmaster* game pulled from Midway's library of classic hits; Spotlight, an elegantly simple puzzle game that challenges player memory; and Word Search, another classic that puts linguistic skills to the test.

The Touch Key feature gives operators the ability to create customized menus for locations that will control volume, high scores, and advertising pages. It can also enable and disable certain games and features, such as erotic content.

"*Touchmaster* can now be customized for each location to maximize earnings," said Midway director of sales Rachel Davies. "With the ability to create customized message screens, *Touchmaster* becomes a valuable advertising tool." For more information, contact Midway Games, (773)961-1826; fax (773)961-1060.

CATEGORIES
CARDS
ACTION
NEW
WORDS
SKILL
EROTIC
INSERT COIN
MIDWAY

Midway is shipping *Touchmaster 3000*, a software update for the *Touchmaster* countertop.



CLEAR THE AREA

TO ADD THE HOT NEW REDEMPTION GAME FROM SKEE-BALL INC.

DEMOLITION ZONE

A CLEVER NEW TWIST ON TRADITIONAL WHACKING GAMES

Players demolish a three-dimensional building by hitting the flashing buttons on the control panel as they light up. With each successful whack, the building collapses a level. Real-life sound effects and explosive lights encourage the players as they try to demolish the building within the allotted time.

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SKEE-BALL
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Ft. Lauderdale plays host to Leisurexpo

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., will play host this month to the Seventh Annual Leisurexpo, Feb. 19-21, at the Broward County Convention Center. Show organizers predict an increase in the number of attendees and booths for this year's event.

Following six years in Orlando, the show is expected to draw a bonus audience of amusement professionals from South Florida in addition to some 6,000 national and international attendees who traveled to Leisurexpo `97.

Complementing a wide range of entertainment-related exhibits is an education program covering everything from go-kart maintenance to personnel management and marketing strategies.

Product categories on display include coin-op games, go-kart equipment, food and beverage concessions, miniature golf equipment, redemption/plush merchandise, simulators and rides, soft modular play equipment, sound and lighting effects, and souvenirs and novelties.

Organizations sponsoring the show include the Bowling Proprietors of America, International Recreational Go-Kart Association, Miniature Golf Association of America, National Soft Serve and Fast Food Association, Resort and Commercial Recreation Association, and Souvenir & Novelty Trade Association. For more information, contact Leisurexpo, (305)448-7976.

American Vending opens new office

American Vending Sales opened a new branch office this month in Springfield, Ill. The new facility features a showroom, parts, service, and an inventory of new and used equipment.

The office will be staffed and managed by Tad Mauro, who brings 14 years of industry experience to the position. Mauro has worked in sales, service, operations, and manufacturing. "This opportunity will bring to our growth base in the down state area the quality on-site equipment and service we successfully provide at our Elk Grove, Ill., headquarters," said AVS' Frank Gumma Jr.

The new office will be located at 2861 Baker Dr., Suite 4, Springfield, Ill., 62703; (217)492-9400; fax (217)492-9405; e-mail (avsspringfield@american-vending.com).

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Have You
HEARD
?

☛ Just Kiddie Rides Enterprises has moved its corporate offices to 250 Executive Dr., Edgewood, NY 11717; (516)586-6059 or (800)858-7433; fax (516)586-6305. The company is currently shipping its line of Sesame Street rides.

☛ Jessup, Pa.,-based Mini-Golf Inc. has launched its new Web site (http://www.minigolfinc.com). The company can be reached at (717)489-8623; fax (714)383-9970.

☛ Micro Mfg. of Lavergne, Tenn., has announced plans to offer kits for New Image and U.S. Games units, as well as a new *Magical Touch 4* update, in the near future.

☛ The Urban Land Institute will hold its International Conference on Urban Entertainment Development March 2-3 at the Marriott Marquis Times Square, New York, N.Y. Interactive entertainment venues such as Lazer Park and XS New York have spurred interest in the Times Square area in recent years.

☛ Jim Chaney, formerly of the Component Factory, has opened Keystone Game Supply, 340 Constance Dr., Suite 3, Warminster, PA 18974; (888)869-7711; fax (215)675-5767. The company will supply electronic components for the amusement game industry. ▲

WHAT'S NEW

NFL/NFLPA Blitz

Midway Games introduces *NFL/NFLPA Blitz*, a 3D football video licesed by the National Football League and National Football League Players Inc., the marketing and licensing arm of the National Football League Players Association. The game utilizes the latest generation 3Dfx hardware system to generate realistic NFL action.

***Blitz* also utilizes a new 49-way joystick to allow precision, acrobatic passing, rushing, and blitzing. Traditional football rules have been altered slightly to maximize the entertainment value. Instead of 10 yards for a first down, players have four downs to go 30 yards using any number of plays including the Superfly, Hail Mary, and Da Bomb. However, the defense can counter with a variety of blitzes including the feared suicide blitz.**

Thanks to the incredible appeal of the NFL, the game should appeal to a wide range of audiences ranging from 18- to 54-year-olds, all of whom can participate with their favorite leagues players.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Midway Games, (773)961-1000; fax (773)961-1060; e-mail (webmaster@wms.com); Web site (http://www.midway.com).

New games from Bob's Space Racers

Bob's Space Racers (BSR) presents three new attractions. They include its park and trailer model midway *Center Vertical Water Game*, space-age theme redemption game *Red Planet*, and racing theme novelty game *Speed Shifter*.

Sparkling neon, dazzling marquee lights, and the tested popularity of BSR's water games, ensures the success of the *Center Vertical Water Game*, which features race toys zooming up the vertical track powered by players' water gun skills.

Red Planet offers players a chance to land the Pathfinder explorer on Mars using an advanced joystick and grabber to precisely cover the landing site so that no light shows through the landing disc.

The game is equipped with advanced digital technology and sound and can be re-themed in the future with new sound, colors, and lights. *Red Planet* is based on the popular redemption game *Total Eclipse*.

Speed Shifter puts players behind the wheel, shifting with the changing rally lights, in a race to the top of the game's playfield. The player who shifts fastest as the lights change will win the race. However, every player walks away a winner from this redemption attractions, which features digital technology and sound and the ability to re-theme the game.

BSR is also offering its new Player Ready Building, which can come complete with any BSR game of choice. The plug-and-play unit is easily moved and helps meet the need for locations with limited space.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Bob's Space Racers, (904)677-0761; fax (904)677-0794.

Starship Troopers

SEGA
DEATH FROM ABOVE

Sega Pinball storms into the pinball market with another hit game based on Sony/TriStar Pictures *Starship Troopers*, a fast-paced, futuristic war epic in which young people battle killer bugs who want to take over the planet.

The game was designed with all the central plot elements of the movie in mind including a moving fire warrior bug assault battle simulator and a dynamic brain bug that rises up from the playfield.

Along with custom speech by the actors and movie music, there are four unique multiball sequences and Sega Pinball's new tri-flipper action for increased playability.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Sega Pinball, (708)345-7700; fax (708)345-7813.

WHAT'S NEW

Galaxy Games

Creative Electronics and Software (CES) Inc. introduces the *Galaxy Games* cocktail table unit, a multi-game cartridge system. Each unit comes with at least seven titles pre-loaded including Global Domination, Galactic Golf, Battle Bricks, Big Bang Bowling, Astro Hockey, and 3D Tic Tac Toe.

As many as four additional cartridges can be added to the unit, and each cartridge contains up to 10 games. Currently CES is offering Cardmania, which contains 10 classic card games, as an add-on.

***Galaxy Games* takes many of the same type of attractions that do well in countertop units and uses the trackball and two-player functions to create head-to-head competitive experiences.**

The cocktail table has a 19" monitor and comes in two sizes: the standard 29" high table or the 42" bar/pedestal table. Games are operator adjustable and allow for the creation of a custom advertising screen for each location. A Spanish language option is available.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact CES, (847)695-0023; fax (847)695-0483.

Cirqus Voltaire, No Good Golfers

Williams Electronic Games presents its two newest pinball adventures. They are *Cirqus Voltaire*, released under the Bally imprint, and *No Good Golfers.*

The design of *Cirqus Voltaire*, including the location of the dot matrix display on the playfield as opposed to the backbox, will help novice players who weren't previously able to look up at the dot matrix without losing their ball.

Combining this feature with the appeal and mystery of the circus theme, players are challenged to do battle with the crazed Ringmaster who actually pops up from the playfield and captures the player's ball.

The goal is to complete nin marvels and earn the chance to join the circus. While trying to complete the shots, players will encounter a variety of challenges and opportunities including a pop-up bumper, interactive backglass feature, and several different multiball sequences. *Cirqus Voltaire* ships standard with colorful cabinet and neon tube, and operators can order a special purple frame for the backbox.

Game play in *No Good Golfers* focuses on completing nine holes of golf. To play a hole, players shoot a lit drive shot, then complete the hole by hitting the lit putt-out shot. Strategy comes into play as an innovative new Spinning Whirlwind in the middle of the playfield provides an additional award when the player putts out.

The game introduces another new innovative playfield toy, the Slam Ramp feature. At the beginning of each ball, the Slam Ramp mechanism lowers to the playfield and challenges the player to hit it and launch it into the driving range. Once there, the player can either hit the cart, award yardage, or hit a valuable hole-in-one.

Throughout the game, Buzz and Bud provide a running dialogue and serve as targets that activate multiball. The gophers are also featured prominently in the playfield and backbox artwork, which includes a real backglass with a mirror.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Williams Electronics Games, (773)961-1000; fax (773) 961-1060; e-mail (webmaster@wms.com); Web site (http://www.midway.com).

Skillshot

HanaHo Games presents *Skillshot*, a fast coin novelty game that comes in two models: one perfect for arcades and another aimed at nightclub/restaurant locations. The object of the game is to shoot a coin across six rails and sink all the balls without dropping the 8-ball.

***Skillshot* is available in a black or yellow cabinet showcasing its eye-catching design and attractive black light feature perfect for adult locations. Features include operator-adjustable difficulty settings and payouts, over 24 ways to win points, and a bright LED display/scoreboard attract mode.**

Options include a ticket or capsule dispenser, progressive jackpot feature, black light, and the ability to link as many as eight units. Dimensions are 24" deep x 26" wide x 62" high. The game weighs 225 lbs.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact HanaHo Games, (626)963-5966; fax (626)963-5696; e-mail (debspeedyg@aol.com).

Tidel ATM

Dynamo Interactive, through a strategic alliance with Tidel Engineering Inc., is now deploying Tidel ATM terminals in coin-op amusement, vending, and gaming locations in the United States as well as international markets.

Based in Carrollton, Texas, Tidel is one of the major low-cost ATM manufacturers in the United States, according to Dynamo Interactive, which said the machines are proven to be one of the industry's most reliable systems.

As part of its arrangement, Dynamo Interactive is providing sales training and technical support to its existing national distribution network as well as offering direct service to ATM owners and locations. Dynamo Interactive will also handle monthly settlement from surcharge and interchange fees directly with terminal owners.

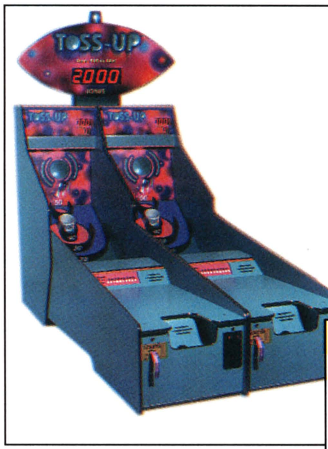
For more information, or distributor referral, contact Dynamo Interactive, (817)284-0114 ext 202; e-mail (struhs@txcc.net); Web site (http://www.dynamo-ltd.com).

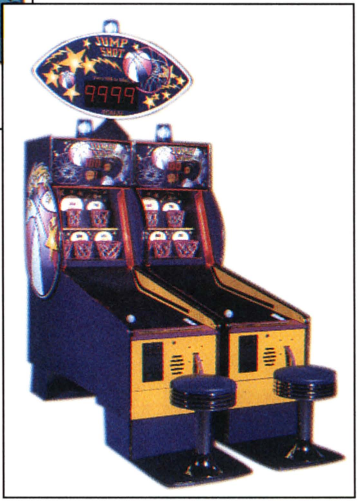
Toss-Up, Jump Shot

Bay-Tek introduces its two newest redemption games, *Toss-Up* and *Jump Shot*, both of which combine the tradition of an alley bowler-style game with the excitement of a live-action sports attraction.

Toss-Up is loaded with neon lights, jazzy sounds, and colorful graphics. The game offers players the opportunity to toss their balls through the air at ticket value target holes ranging from 20 to 100 points. This feature gives the player more control.

A giant progressive sign and stools are optional. The units are bankable and weigh 550 lbs. Dimensions are 122" deep x 30" wide x 78" high.



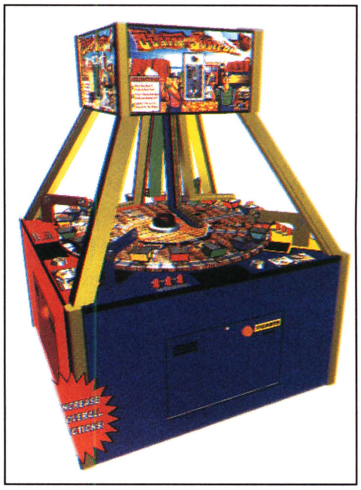


Jump Shot is a scoring game in which players can shoot as many baskets as possible in an attempt to win big. The game features flashing lights, super sounds, and colorful graphics.

By combining the genres of alley bowler and roll down game along with adjustable height, the game can attract players of all ages. The games are bankable, and a giant progressive sign and stools are optional. Shipping weight is 485 lbs., and dimensions are 81" deep x 25.5" wide with an adjustable height of 68" or 78" high.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Bay-Tek, (920)822-3951; fax (920)822-8936; e-mail (baytek@sparknet.net); Web site (http://www.bay-tek.com).

Claim Jumper



Benchmark Games presents *Claim Jumper*, its newest skill redemption game, featuring 18 action-packed train cars each holding up to 180 tokens that offer a fast train ride to redemption riches.

The game is available in three- or four-player versions, holds as many as 4,000 tickets per player stations, and offers as many as 18 progressive jackpots as players attempt to drop their coins off in the dump slot.

Each game offers a full one-year warranty and weighs 385 lbs. Dimensions are 60" high x 47" wide x 47" deep.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Benchmark Games, (954)781-8080 or (800)808-8860; fax (954)781-7900; e-mail (alkress@benchmarkent.com); Web site (http://www.benchmarkent.com).

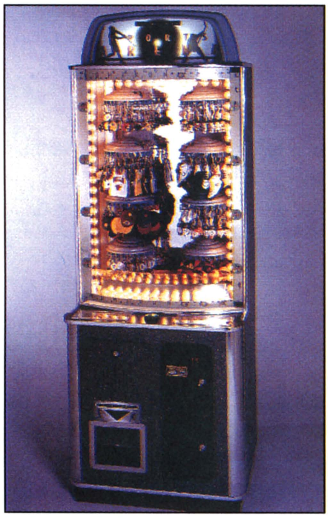
Sports Arena

Sammy USA Corp. presents *Sports Arena*, a unique prize vendor with a sleek and contemporary look ideal for any location. Special prize kits include sports and novelty packs.

Among the game's features are: a quality constructed and secure cabinet with anti-tilt design, operator-adjustable settings, the ability to showcase 160 prizes, easy prize set-up, and self-contained operations with no attendant necessary. A $1 and $5 bill acceptor, as well as international electrical specs, are optional.

The company has also introduced a smaller version of its popular crane-type merchandiser game, *Key Catcher Mini*, which holds up to 150 prizes and can be customized to an individual location.

For more information, contact Sammy USA Corp., (847)364-9787 or (888)877-2669; fax (847)364-9831; Web site (http://www.sammyusa.com).



Champion Shot, Lil' Champ

Champion Shuffleboard announces the two newest additions to its product line: the interactive, educational video-based *Lil' Champ* and the novelty sports redemption game *Champion Shot.*

Lil' Champ is a non-violent game that includes over 60 interchangeable games with characters from such popular children's programs as "Sesame Street," "Beauty & the Beast," and "Richard Scary's Busy Town." The unit interacts with players by using stories, games, and video to teach ABCs, reading, painting, and more.

Special features on this game, previously available in a non-coin-op version, include time control and remote control over functions such as sound effects. Over 60 more multilanguage games are also available. Dimensions are 25" deep x 21" wide x 52" high. The unit weighs 125 lbs.

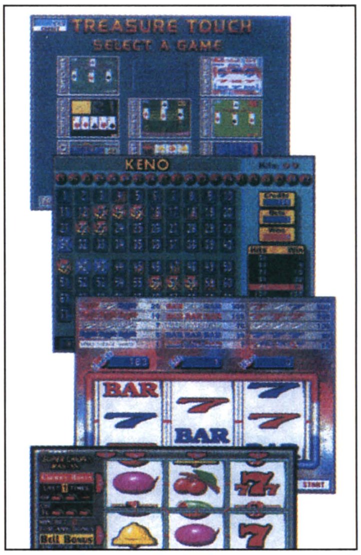
CHAMPION SHOT
CHAMPION

Champion Shot combines the thrill and excitement of basketball with a location-size arcade attraction that offers fast-paced, competitive two-player action. By holding down a special Charge Button located on the right side of each end of the game, the player builds up enough power to shoot the ball out of holes on the playfield to the scoring basket.

Other features include a Heckler button that lets competitors jeer opponents, live-action sound effects, ticket redemption, and a large Plexiglas dome with open sides for spectator enjoyment. Dimensions are 48" deep x 22" wide x 50" high. The unit weighs 160 lbs.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Champion Shuffleboard, (817)284-3499 or (800)826-7856; fax (817)595-1506.

Treasure Touch Professional



Electromatic International announces its *Treasure Touch Professional*, a versatile multigame units that offers a special Reflex percentage control and robust Pentium-powered technology.

Games include: Treasure Master, Bonus Poker, Vegas Poker, Keno, Red White Blue, Progressive Black Jack, Bonus Black Jack, and Standard Black Jack. Bingo, Baccarat, and more fruit games are on the way.

The unit's hardware supports touch screen and or seven-button setup, standard RGB or VGA monitors, bill validator, coin acceptor, remote-in entry, printer, hopper, ticket dispenser, and knock-off switch were permitted. All software available on EPROMs.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Electromatic International, (954)421-1880; fax (954)421-3875.

WHAT'S NEW

Pacesetter 8000 series

Digital Vehicles presents its Pacesetter 8000 Professional Racing Simulator Series, which runs on a Pentium-based system and features 3D sound.

The 8000 Series provides three different cars, three different tracks, genuine racing pedals, and a choice between manual and automatic transmissions in its attempt to create the authentic sights, sounds, and tactile feedback of a professional race car.

Driver aids include automatic or anti-lock brakes and traction control, while intense steering feedback challenges players to wrestle control against jolts, bumps, and walls. The 8000 comes in traditional stand-up cabinet with 33" VGA monitor. Dimensions are 32.6" wide x 65.2" high x 55" deep.

Pacesetter 8327 Formula offers the same realistic racing simulation with an impressive 180 degree, three-screen wraparound display that showcases high speed, texture-mapped graphics. Pacesetter 8327 Deluxe includes a Formula model car body with real rubber racing slicks, genuine rear wing, and a leather-wrapped steering wheel.

All three units are based on a standard PC chassis and can be upgraded to faster processors and more powerful graphics boards. Built-in software permits new tracks, cars, and features to be added at a low cost. Two games can be linked.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Digital Vehicles, (512)837-5043; fax (512)832-5954; e-mail (digvehicle@aol.com).

pacesetter 8000

Bear Claw Cranes, Prize Circus

Smart Industries introduces its new line of *Bear Claw* cranes, as well as the *Prize Circus* merchandising game

The *Bear Claw* line has a streamlined design developed to minimize set-up and maintenance. A front hinged door swings open for quick access to the playfield, and the bottom door provides ample access to all necessary components for periodic adjustments and information.

Bear Claw cranes available include 26" and 26.25"wide, 34" and 34.25" wide, 42" and 42.25" wide, and 60" and 60.25" wide. All the units are 31.75" deep x 76.75 high. Standard features are a bill acceptor, modular steel frame support, credit/timer readout, double coin mechs with locking cashboxes, coat-hanger-proof windows and doors, tempered safety glass, and high-security three- and five-point locking systems.

A variety of options such as prize detection systems, DBAs, and various bulk and other value-added dispensing systems are also available.

Win Fabulous Prizes

Win Fabulous Prizes
PRIZE CIRCUS

Prize Circus challenges players to stop a rotating light at one of eight dispensing coils in order to select the prize for which they wish to compete. They then attempt to match the second spinning light to win the prize. When the lights match, the prize is automatically vended.

Prizes from small watches or jewelry items to chains and necklaces up to 21" long and jumbo plush pieces up to 15" can all be displayed simultaneously in the same machine. A large hinged door gives operators easy access to the playfield for refilling merchandise or routine maintenance.

A five-point locking system and anti-wire extrusions provide security, while a lower access door with three-point lock provides access to game boards, locking cash box, and testing and audit information. The prize coil features a unique anti-tilt design ensuring the prizes cannot be rocked or knocked free.

Each *Prize Circus* comes standard with double coin mechs, dollar bill acceptor, sound system, and credit display. Optional floor stool, top marquee, and 220VAC transformer are also available. Dimensions are 42" wide x 42.5" deep x 76.5" high.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Smart Industries, (515)265-9900 or (800)553-2442; fax (515)265-3148; e-mail (smart-ind@worldnet.att.net).

Magic Dart III

Erwo Elektronika presents *Magic Dart III* tournament units, offering a choice of 16 games and 18 options that adds up to 170 different play variations. Offered for the first time are games like Hurry Up and Snake and options such as Magic Circle, Handicap, Time, Training, and Bonus.

Each player can select target sectors, different games in one round, single or multiplayer competition, lights, and sound effects. Professional players can exchange credits for time and win a bonus free game.

Standard features include light effects, an attractive cabinet design, management system including testing and programming, bill validator, self-adhesive throw line, a set of darts and spare tops, and a coin mech connection.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Erwo Elektronika, +(385) (01) 240 064 or +(385) (01) 243 140; fax +(385) (01) 240 065. ▲

WHO'S NEWS

Third generation family business owner and past AMOA president **TAMI NORBERG-PAULSEN** of C & N Sales in Mankato, Minn., has sold her interest in the company to her brother **TIM NORBERG**. Tami, Tim, and their dad Harlow Norberg had jointly owned the company.

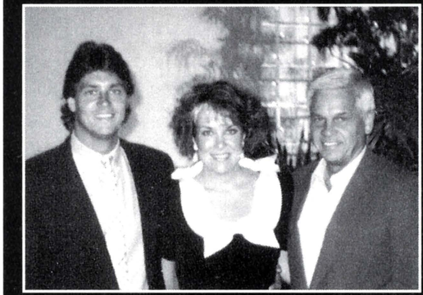
Tami literally grew up in the business; she joined the firm full time 18 years ago and became not only intensely involved in the day-to-day business but worked her way up the ladder as an active leader in both the state and national associations, becoming the first woman president of the Minnesota Operators of Music and Amusements and the second woman president in the history of the Amusement and Music Operators Association in 1994.

Reflecting on her career, Tami said, "I have loved each and every minute that I have worked in and been a part of this industry. Throughout the last 18 years it has been my privilege and pleasure to work with many wonderful, talented, and dedicated industry personnel on a variety of projects. My involvement with trade groups such as the VNEA, NDA, MOMA, IOMA, AAMA, and AMOA have been especially rewarding. My life has been truly enriched by these experiences and I will always cherish the many wonderful relationships and friendships that I have developed within this industry."

Tami has joined her husband Bryan's growing company in Mankato. She can be reached at Paulsen Architectural Design, 220 E. Main St., Mankato, MN 56001; (507)388-9811, e-mail (tambry@ic.mankato.mn.us).

In recognition of her contribution to the industry on state and national levels, MOMA honored Tami at a mid-January luncheon in Minneapolis.

Tami Norberg-Paulsen and her husband Bryan Paulsen will be in business together.



Tami with her brother Tim and dad Harlow at an industry event back in 1989.

Chuck Morton

CHUCK MORTON has been promoted to the post of vice president of U.S. sales for Innovative Concepts in Entertainment. Morton's coin-op career started at Alternate Worlds Technology developing virtual reality systems. He then became national sales director for H. Betti Industries when the Fun Merchants division was formed. After serving as national sales director for Acclaim Coin-Op he joined I.C.E. as U.S. sales manager. Morton is based in Louisville, Ky., (502)254-9615; fax (502)254-2640; e-mail (iceractive@aol.com).

TouchTunes Digital Jukebox has added three sales executives to its growing staff. The newest members of the TouchTunes team are **DAN CLARTON**, midwest regional sales manager; **CHUCK WEST**, southeast regional sales manager; and **TOM HYNES**, northeast regional sales manager.

Clarton has been in both distribution and manufacturing during his 10 years in the industry, most recently with American Vending Sales (AVS) and previously with Premier Technology. He will be based in the TouchTunes Buffalo Grove, Ill., office, (888)338-5853; (847)419-3300. Clarton commented, "I'm looking forward to the challenges and the personal growth associated with this opportunity. The new technology is exciting, and there is a lot of operator enthusiasm." Regarding his time in music and game sales at AVS, he added, "AVS has been a phenomenal place to be for the past six and a half years. I consider it an honor to have worked for the Gumma family and wish them continued success."

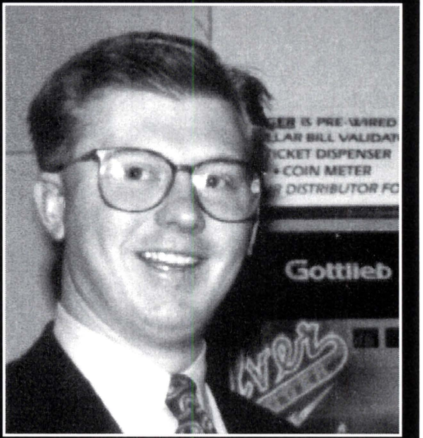
West comes on board at TouchTunes after three years in sales with

Merit Industries. He will be based in a new TouchTunes Atlanta office. Hynes also was on the sales force at Merit Industries. He will be based in the TouchTunes Philadelphia office, (215)830-1452.

RICHARD MOORE has been named national sales manager of the Tidel ATM product line being distributed by Dynamo Interactive. Moore founded and maintains ownership in Western States ATM Systems and has been involved in the ATM industry for five years. Moore has an intricate knowledge of the business and the Tidel product.

Moore said Dynamo received "a very encouraging response" to the Tidel Anycard 'td' 1 ATM terminal at recent trade shows. He noted that coin-op took note of ATMs when Cirrus and Plus, the major networks, allowed surcharging for cash withdrawals at ATM terminals. Moore can be reached at (817)284-0114, ext. 165.

Chuck West (l) and Tom Hynes



Dan Clarton

DAVID GROOS has been named senior vice president of sales and marketing for Heads Up Technologies, creators of the LazerTrek laser tag game. Groos has over 20 years of experience in technical sales and marketing management. His responsibilities will include entertainment and aviation sales, marketing, external program development, advertising, customer services, and corporate alliances.

Heads Up president Rob Harshaw commented, "As Heads Up continues its rapid growth, we recognized the need to add an executive to maximize sales. David's marketing expertise and sales perspective will be a valuable addition to the company and will help both sides of the business." Groos can be reached at (214)407-1131; fax (214)407-1758; e-mail (dgroos@heads-up.com). ▲

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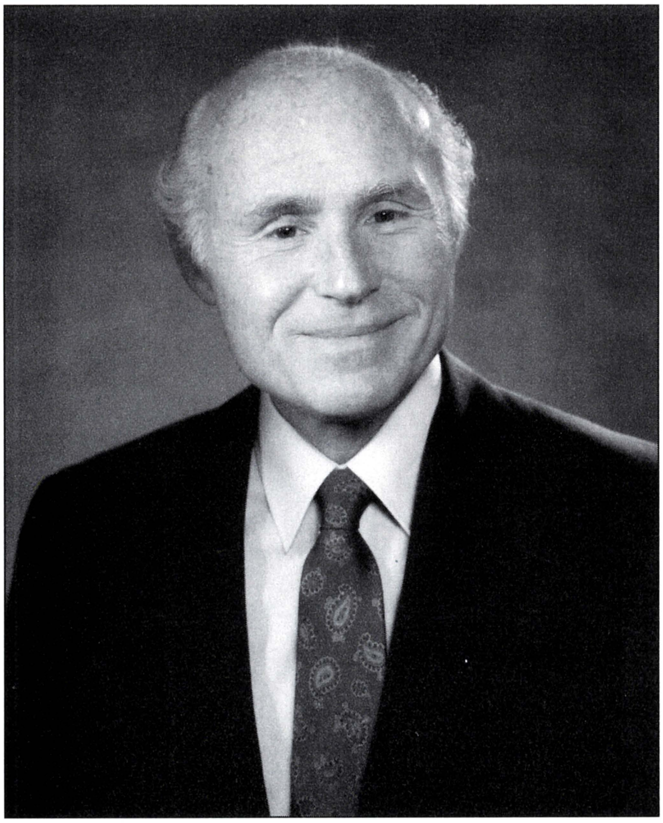
JOHN CHWAT

INTERVIEW

Sen. Herbert Kohl (D-Wis.)



On Nov. 25, 1997 Senators Herbert Kohl and Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) held a news conference in Washington, D.C. on video game violence. Both senators praised the video game community for "their cooperation and commitment to making the rating system a real success." Sen. Kohl of Milwaukee has expressed his concern over what he perceives as violent game content and the need for the industry to implement a new code of conduct and parental advisory materials. The following interview with Sen. Kohl details his thoughts on this issue. He remains deeply committed to this issue and will continue his efforts to address video game content in the coming year.

Q: Are you satisfied with the Entertainment Software Rating Board's (ESRB) activities on interactive video and computer entertainment games?

A: It is our understanding that most of the computer and dedicated-platform games being sold are being rated under the IDSA system. I am pleased that all games are being rated, although I believe the IDSA age-based system is easier for parents to understand than the ESRB's content-based system. However, as was discussed in our report card on the industry in November, all new games are being rated, and almost every game on store shelves bears a rating. That is real progress and we are very pleased with the industry's voluntary action on this.

Q: This fall, AMOA and AAMA provided you with a "new" code of conduct and parental advisory recommendations on video game content. What is your opinion of these recommendations?

A: We have worked closely with AMOA and AAMA in the last year. When we issued a report card for the industry in 1996, it was clear to us that the coin-op piece of the industry was really lacking in progress and had done virtually nothing while the retail side of the industry had been making some actual progress. So we concentrated on bringing the arcade owners, operators, and game manufacturers on board. And through our work with AAMA and AMOA a code of conduct has been developed, a rating system has been created, refined, and implemented on all new games. An educational campaign about those ratings has been designed. These developments all reflect some real work on the issue by the coin-op industry. However, without their full cooperation in implementing access-limiting measures in the arcades (for children too young to be playing some of the more violent games), this system will be ineffective. So we are looking forward to taking that next step with the arcade folks.

Q: Have you been contacted by organizations concerned about video game content, ratings, or labeling or groups seeking federal regulation of the industry? Alternately, have you been contacted by the industry on this issue especially since the Nov. 25 Washington press conference?

A: Our office has worked closely with a host of interested parties—from the National Institute on Media and the Family, to industry associations such as IDSA, AAMA, and AMOA to the PTA for a long time, and we will continue to work with them.

Q: On the issue of ratings and content, do you distinguish between home computer video games that consumers purchase and video games that appear in arcades for the public to enter?

A: There is a definite distinction to be made between home games sold in retail stores and arcades. The biggest one is parental involvement, parental awareness, and parental presence. Many children need a parent to buy them a game for home use because of the cost. However, when a game only costs a quarter to play, it is quite a different situation. Additionally, parents can monitor what games are played in the home and can judge their content. Most parents, for whatever reasons, do not go to arcades with their children and are not involved in making choices about which games are played. Therefore, arcades must be equally vigilant, if not more so, about policing the games and the age-appropriateness of the players.

Q: Do you see a connection between violence or crimes committed by children or adults and video game content?

A: I do not know of specific evidence linking violent crimes to the playing of video games. However, I do believe that the images we see and the sounds we hear every day have an impact on our nation's psyche. And there is no one these influences impact more than our young people. Just because they are playing a "shooter" game does not mean they are going to go on a killing spree, but it does desensitize them to violence, and that is unfortunate.

Q: How did you become interested in video game violence?

A: Sen. Lieberman and I first held hearings on this subject when I was chairman of the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee. The industry was nowhere and games were over the top in terms of their violent content. So we decided to take a look at the issue and the industry to see if we could make it more hospitable for families—young people and their parents.

Q: Do you foresee any congressional legislation on the issue of video game content, labeling, ratings, or related issues? Will Congress address this issue in 1998? Will you urge Senators Coats (R-Ind.) or Dodd (D-Conn.), chairman and ranking minority member of the Senate Children and Families Subcommittee to hold hearings on this issue next year?

A: The industry has been very responsive to our non-legislative actions, and we hope to continue working with them in that vein. If progress continues as it has in the past, legislative action will not be necessary. In fact, since legislation was initially offered in 1994 (and was not reintroduced upon a commitment to significant work and progress from the industry), we have not found it necessary to pursue this issue in a legislative way.

Q: Have you or your colleagues networked with any House members on this issue? Do you foresee any House action on this issue in 1998?

A: We have periodically worked with House members on this. Due to the voluntary nature of the industry's work, I don't foresee the need for any legislative action by Congress in 1998.

Q: Are there any other industries to your knowledge that failed to adopt voluntary standard and had to have Congress step in with legislation? Are there any precedents for industry involvement?

A: Most industries, however reluctantly, have come around to adopt ratings systems and some set of standards. In fact, the motion picture industry is a good example of the path the video game industry has taken and that we would like to see them continue on. They implemented a ratings system much as the MPAA did and now they will need to enforce such ratings just as children under 17 are not allowed into an "R" rated movie, unless accompanied by an adult. So I think there is definitely a precedent we can all follow.

Q: Are you satisfied that the industry can enforce the standards for video game content and ratings?

A: This is yet the greatest challenge we face with video games. Without enforcement, the system cannot work—it will mean nothing. In the arcades, labeling games with ratings stickers will only serve to draw children to the more violent games unless measures are taken to ensure that this is not possible. In retail and rental stores, unless shoppers are scrutinized and parents are educated, our work will be for

BIOGRAPHY ON HERB KOHL

Herb Kohl was elected the Senate in 1988 and re-elected to a second six-year term in 1994. He was born and raised in Milwaukee, where he attended public school. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a masters degree in business administration from Harvard University.

Before coming to the Senate, Kohl helped build his family-owned business, Kohl's grocery and department stores. In 1985 he bought the Milwaukee Bucks to ensure the basketball team remained in Milwaukee. He is a recognized as an avid sportsman.

During his time in office, Sen. Kohl has been recognized as a leader in the Congress for his work in cutting the federal deficit. Independent nonpartisan groups have consistently given him high marks for his votes against wasteful spending and the Concord Coalition ranked him first in the Senate for his deficit reduction votes in 1996.

On the first day of the 105th Congress, Sen. Kohl introduced the "Child Care Infrastructure Act," a bill to encourage private companies and institutions to build on or near site day care centers to meet the rapidly growing demand for child care. The bill was commended in the January 1997 issue of "Working Mother" magazine. Sen. Kohl said he will make passage of the Child Care Infrastructure Act one of his highest priorities.

Sen. Kohl also has focused on anticrime legislation, especially crimes related to kids. He reauthorized juvenile justice programs in the federal government and authored laws which prevent the sale of handguns to minors and prohibit handguns from being brought into a school zone. Sen. Kohl serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee, the Judiciary Committee, and the Special Committee on Aging.

He remains active in Wisconsin charitable activities, including the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation, which has awarded $1.8 million to Wisconsin students and teachers through scholarships and grants.

naught. I believe that if the industry chooses to it can enforce the ratings system, and it is my hope that the enforcement will improve from the "C" grade it earned in 1997. In terms of standards for content, the industry is producing less violent fare in aggregate than in the past, but the violent games that are out there are often sick, grotesque, and unfortunately, best-selling. I hope we can look to some of the larger game manufacturers to be good corporate citizens and to set an example of producing fun, educational, and worthwhile games for young people that other companies can follow.

John Chwat is president of Chwat & Co., a government relations firm in Old Towne Alexandria, Va. which represents trade and professional associations. He has more than 26 years experience working on Capitol Hill. He can be reached at (703)684-7703. ▲

SEN. JOE LIEBERMAN'S COMMENTS FROM WASHINGTON D.C. NEWS CONFERENCE

The report card we are releasing today on video game violence tells us that we have reached a turning point in our efforts to make this market safer for children. It is in some ways a turn for the good and in others a turn for the ghastly.

First the good news: the National Institute on Media and the Family's Survey shows that the rating system we challenged the game makers to develop has matured into a model of industry responsibility. Virtually every new video and computer game released today carries a rating that is both informative and easy to understand and it seems clear that many parents are using the ratings to guide their purchases or rentals.

By most accounts the lion's share of new games coming on the market contain little if any violence. Indeed, as a recent cover story in "Business Week" noted many titles are not just kid-friendly but mentally stimulating, helping to teach children new ways of learning. Last but not least, the coin-operated game industry has begun to answer our call to develop its own antiviolence plan.

Taken together, these developments are very encouraging, and I want to join Sen. Kohl in praising the video game community for their cooperation and commitment along with Wal-Mart and several other major retailers to making the rating system a real success.

The bad news: There remains a small but significant element within the industry that insists on churning out ever-more graphic, gruesome, and grotesque products. For example, consider the games Postal and Carmageddon, the goal of which is not to kill bad guys or monsters but to delight in the death of innocent people. In Postal, players score points for gunning down a group of parishioners leaving a church and for napalming a high school marching band. In Carmageddon, players are rewarded for running down pedestrians, including an elderly woman with a walker. This is sick stuff and sadly it sells. These games are not on the fringes: Postal was the third top-selling action game in October, and for the year, three exceedingly violent computer games—Diablo (#1), Quake (#5), and Duke Nukem (#10)—ranked within the 10 best sellers.

These high-tech perversions are often marketed in ways that are as offensive as the games themselves. Again, let me cite a few examples. Postal's Web site eggs on players to "watch victims run around on fire, screaming for help, until their charred corpses fall to the ground...listen to victims moan and beg for mercy...execute them if they get on your nerves."

Carmageddon's Web site shows a screaming pedestrian getting slammed by a car with the disclaimer: "shown with optional hood ornament."

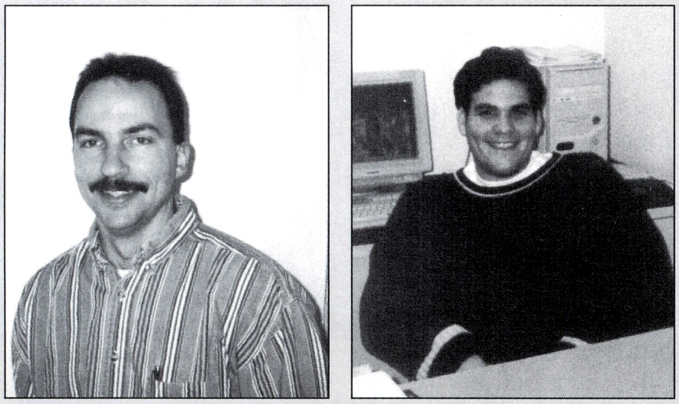
Some in the industry dismiss criticisms of these gore-filled products and their ad campaigns by saying they're "just games" or by pointing to the fact that they are rated "M" for players 17 and over and meant only for adults. The reality is that many of the hyperviolent games are being targeted at kids—Duke Nukem's distributor, GT Interactive, is now promoting its own line of action figures, and the developers of MDK, the motto of which is "It thinks, therefore it kills" are reportedly planning to turn the game into an animated television series. And we know that these games are reaching many young players regardless of the ratings, frequently through free demos downloaded from the Internet, as the National Institute cites in its report.

Let there be no doubt. These games are not harmless fun, as some suggest, but digital poison. When combined with all the murder and mayhem depicted throughout the electronic media, they are helping to create a culture of violence that is increasingly enveloping our children, desensitizing them to the consequences and ultimately cheapening the value of human life. But this is not just about children. The likes of Postal and Carmageddon do violence to our most fundamental values, and bit by bit, help feed the troubling "anything goes" mentality that permeates our society.

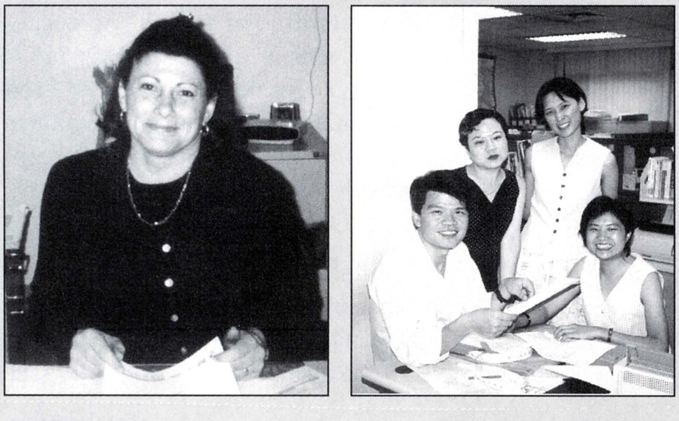
There is no doubt that some parents are not paying enough attention to the games their kids are playing. The new Parents Guide will hopefully encourage them to take a more active role and I want to thank the National Institute for developing it. But parents can't to it alone. That is why we are again asking gamemakers to set some basic standards and limit the violence in the games they mass market. A good place to start would for Panasonic, the distributor of Postal, to stamp this repugnant game "return to sender."

Henry Yeh, president of Entropy International

ENTROPY finds niche in COMPONENTS and games



TOP LEFT.: Jeff Blair, chief operating officer, Entropy USA; **TOP RIGHT.:** Fred Kesselman, operations manager, Entropy USA; **BOTTOM LEFT.:** Robby Juran, receptionist/bookkeeper, Entropy USA; **BOTTOM RIGHT.:** At the main office in Taiwan, (l-r): Joe Joe and support staff—Sophia Yeh, Judith Shih, and Sherry Chang.



Leave it to a forward-thinking company like Entropy to select a physics term to be its namesake. In thermodynamics, entropy means "the measure of energy in a system." Entropy is growing rapidly with a broad base of products.

Do you need game components, from ticket dispensers to coin doors? Entropy has it.

Want to license a redemption game such as *Screamin' Slopes, Cops 'n Robbers,* and *Fort Knocks*? Entropy has it.

Are you looking for something totally different in kiddie rides and battery-operated cars? Entropy has it.

If you haven't heard much about Entropy International and its subsidiary Entropy USA before now, that is about to change. The company is pursuing a higher profile in terms of U.S. staff and a presence in the marketplace. Look for Entropy to secure booth space at all the

The staff of Entropy International

Work continues on the coin door line in the production department.

major trade shows including ASI next month. (This new program began with Fun Expo '97.)

The Taiwan-based company that provides such a broad base of products for the amusement industry also supplies industrial control systems and components, microphones and cables, and multimedia and cellular phone components. That's just today. Who knows what the future will hold?

History

For a key to that future, let's look at the past. Entropy president Henry Yeh entered the amusement business as Wico's buying agent in Asia in 1976. He opened a Wico office and used his expertise and contacts to buy components and send them back to the United States.

By 1981 Henry was ready to strike out on his own. He specialized primarily in components of all types, selling to the United States, Europe, and within Asia, later branching out into games in 1984. Then in 1985 he was instrumental in establishing the pinball market in Taiwan, which resulted in 6,000 pinball machines coming into the country.

With characteristic energy, Yeh and his original staff of three have gradually grown the company, starting with the engineering department. According to Jeff Blair, chief operating officer for Entropy USA, "The first real investment in the company was a good research and development team to design our own products and enhance existing products." Additional staff came later in accounting and sales as growth continued.

Added Jeff: "The crossover to his own company was natural since Henry had the product line and a reputation as a quality component provider."

Expansion

Henry's brother Tony joined the staff in 1989 after a career in the banking industry. His enthusiasm and personality made him perfect for the game division; he was brought on-board to develop the redemption game market.

Henry wanted to bring the redemption concept to Taiwan in the early '90s. That's when he met Jeff, who was vice president of operations at Coin Concepts Inc. Together with Henry's longtime friend Larry Kesselman they embarked on a project to bring CCI's *Rebound* redemption game to Taiwan and Japan. Sadly, Kesselman died while on a business trip in Taiwan in 1991.

Redemption encountered legal difficulties in Taiwan last year. A new law has been proposed for operating the games, and the hope is that legislative approval will come soon.

When the time was right for an Entropy subsidiary in the United States, Henry asked Jeff to head the USA operation in 1996. The corporate office is located in Illinois and is staffed by operations manager Fred Kesselman (Larry's son), warehouse manager Jack Murphy, and receptionist Robby Juran.

The game side

In terms of the game division, Entropy concentrated on the mechanical game play itself, initially producing everything including the graphics in Asia.

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Seated: Joe Joe (l) and Henry Yeh (r); standing, (l-r): Tony Yeh, Johnny Chung, and Walter Lee.

Then the graphics side was turned over to Mark Sprenger of Sting International in the United States. Sprenger was a pinball graphics designer for Williams Electronics before he started his own company.

Entropy felt that in order for a game to do well in the U.S. market, it needed to have the look that Americans were used to. The best solution was to work with a designer, right from the start of development, who was familiar with the American style.

Depending on the complexity of the game, development can take six to eight months or 12 months and beyond for the initial design, graphics, testing, and revisions before a game is street-ready.

Entropy International's R & D consists of two mechanical and two electronic engineers and one software engineer. Joe Joe, vice president of engineering and one of the first three employees, heads this department. A total of 50 employees fulfill duties in engineering, production, administration, and the warehouse. Tooling is handled through other resource companies.

Primary focus

Entropy is not primarily a game supplier; that is a sideline that developed over time. Jeff explained, "Our main business is the component business and that has not slowed down because our components fit into so many niches in this industry—ticket dispensers, power supplies, speakers, coin doors, and castings (metal parts)." The company also manufactures foam balls used in abundance in The Foam Factory activity center from SCS Interactive.

Entropy International does a tremendous amount of business with Williams Electronics every year supplying coin doors and speakers for both pinball and video games.

Other customers include Happ Controls, Motorola, Mars Electronics, Communications Instruments, Kilovac Corp., and Noma Christmas. Entropy makes the Ornamotion Christmas tree light accessory available from Noma in retail stores. Demand for the Ornamotion product has been so high that a machine was designed to manufacture the item 24 hours a day.

In addition, Entropy is the distributor for Williams products in Asia and entered into a joint venture partnership with Williams in 1995 to open the 12,000-square-foot Treasure Island arcade in China.

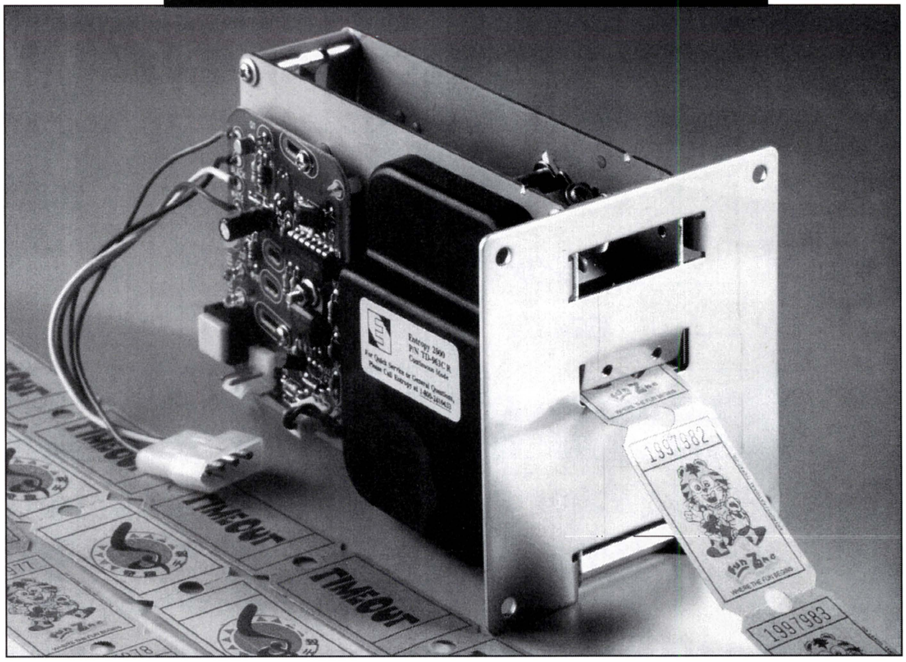
Another joint venture is with National Ticket Co. whereby Entropy manufactures tickets in Taiwan at its own facility under the name ENTC, now the largest supplier of redemption tickets in all of Asia. The company is Taiwan-based but exports to all parts of Asia—Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia.

The product that put Entropy on the map was the Entropy 2000 ticket dispenser with its removable faceplate, push-button ticket feed, and on-board LED diagnostics. "With the birth of the ticket dispenser it became apparent that other components could be marketed under the same format," said Jeff.

How does he feel about what most industry members consider to be a sluggish period in the amusement business? "The redemption market is good based on the ticket dispensers we are selling," Jeff commented. He has a positive outlook: "The component business is very good; we see a lot of potential." ▲

Entropy International's main office is in Taiwan. Entropy USA's sales office is in Toms River, N.J. (732-506-0002); the corporate office is in Bensenville, Ill. (630-616-1815 or 800-241-0633).

The Entropy 2000 ticket dispenser



EYE ON
ASIA

JEFF **BLAIR** and
TONY **YEH**

Asia's dollar still DROPPING

I guess that nearly everyone has heard at least something about the financial problems in Asia these days. Although this is a problem that affects all industries, it is just another blow to the coin-op world. Not that we needed another obstacle! But the facts are just that—facts. The dollar in many Asian countries just doesn't go very far lately.

Just to give you an idea of how hard some countries were hit with the recent drop in their currency against the U.S. dollar, consider this: Thailand, Indonesia, and Korea all face drops in the 60 percent-70 percent range. Staggering! Unless you are a tourist from America, that is real bad news. Other countries like Taiwan and Singapore haven't see quite such a dramatic decline in their dollar, only about 20 percent. Not that this is good news, but hey, look at your neighbor if you think you've got it tough.

Needless to say, this recent economic dark cloud has put a damper on business between the U.S. game factories and their Asian customers. In fact, some factories told us that the money problem started right after the show in Singapore this past August. Many customers who placed orders there quickly put a hold on the shipments hoping to see a quick end to the drop in their dollar.

Still, people want to play new games, and we need to figure a way to get product into their eager hands. (Hands that have money for games in them!) You have read in this column before about ideas to enhance business in Asia. Well, the time couldn't be better for the "kit" idea to surface once again. Selling new, complete, whole games to Asia these days is nearly impossible. Customers want them, but just can't justify the return on investment considering the current money problems there.

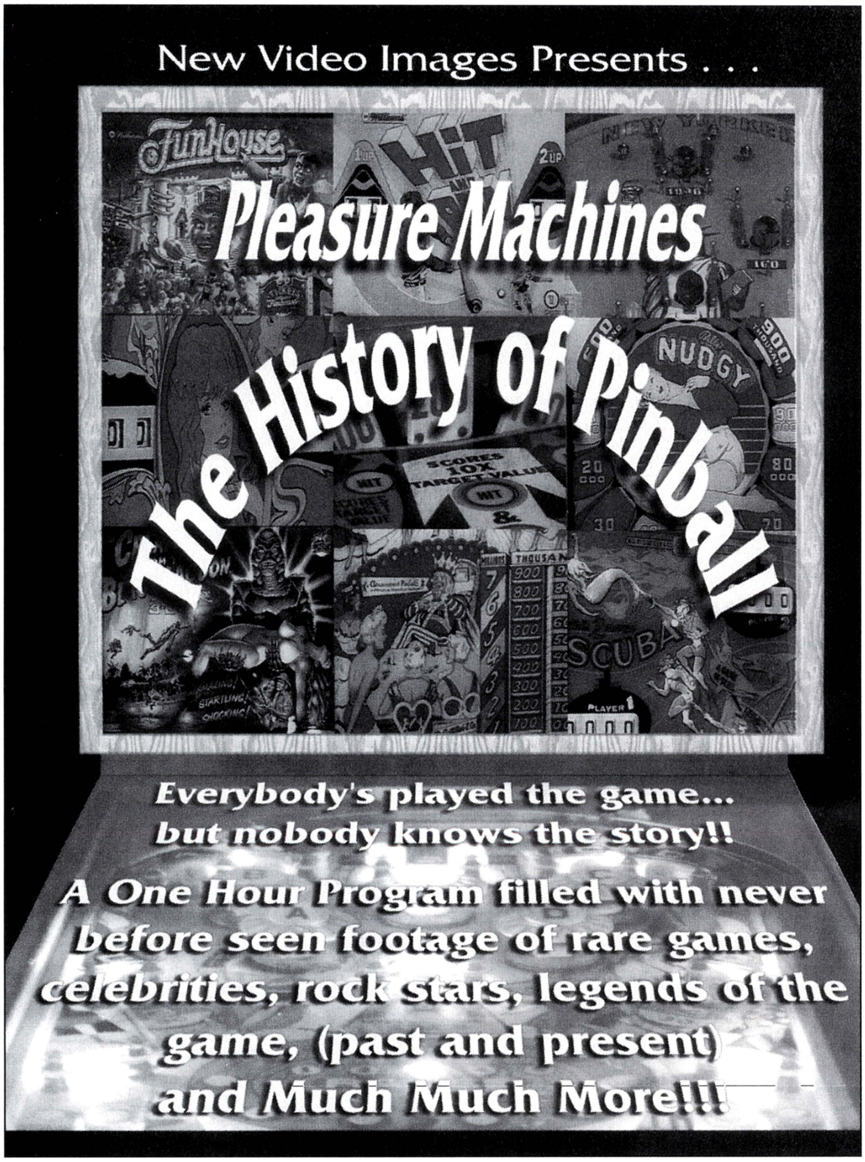
> ***"Needless to say, this recent economic dark cloud has put a damper on business between the U.S. game factories and their Asian customers."***

Now I know some of you may be thinking, "When is this guy going to drop the kit idea?" If kits were only a possibility, then I would have dropped the idea long ago. The fact is that distributors in Asia have approached us with this plan, and now they are very eager to bring games to Asia in this way. The only question is this: Is anyone in America willing to cooperate?

Some questions do still stand. This is not always a simple deal to put together and sometimes the quantities are not as large as some factories would like. I think that some business is better than no business. That is pretty much what selling to Asia these days really boils down to. Hey, it's just an opportunity. Do with it what you want. ▲

Entropy International and Entropy USA have been in the amusement industry for more than 20 years. Tony Yeh is vice president of marketing for the international company and Jeff Blair is the chief operating officer for the USA group. Entropy is involved in the design and manufacture of coin-op games and parts. They can be reached at (908)506-0002; (800)241-0633; e-mail (entropyusa @sprynet.com); Web site (entropyusa.com).

"PLEASURE MACHINES: THE HISTORY OF PINBALL"



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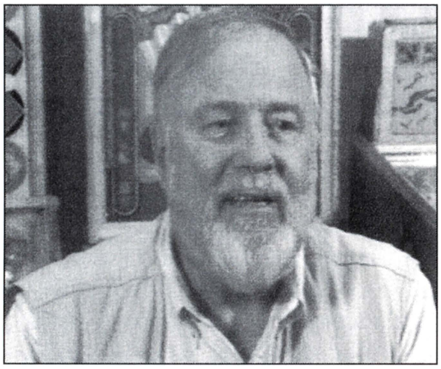
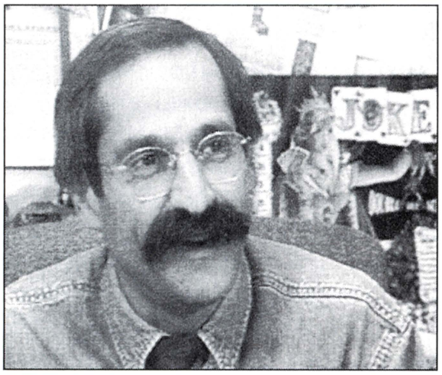
TIM FERRANTE

Steve Kordek



Richard Bueschel



Roger Sharpe

that chronicles the subject of pinball. And it's done with classy camera work, sharp direction, original music, expert narration, and state-of-the-art post-production visual effects. Why, we ask, has it taken so long for such a program to come about? Helms, too, pondered that very question.

"I often wondered why there were over 20 books written on pinball but not one single film!" the affable director confessed. "After spending two long years filled with traveling all over the country and making hundreds and hundreds of phone calls, it was pretty obvious why! It required a lot of research and had to be done right."

For Helms, this project was more than just a game, more than just a video. It was a universe. And conducting research meant finding answers. He got those answers by availing himself of supremely qualified sources like Roger Sharpe of Williams Bally/Midway, whose expertise in the societal power and cultural glory of flipper games is unsurpassed. From Steve Kordek, game designer and genuine legend of the pinball industry. And from Richard Bueschel, a living historical resource and author of over a dozen coin-op books and countless articles.

"To do a film on pinball in the proper fashion, you really have to get inside the game," Helms explained. "For ex-

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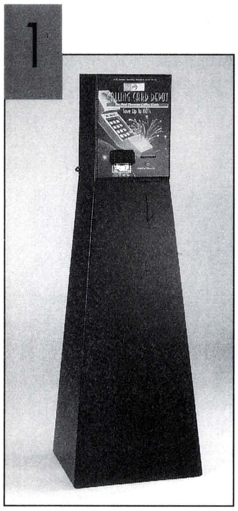
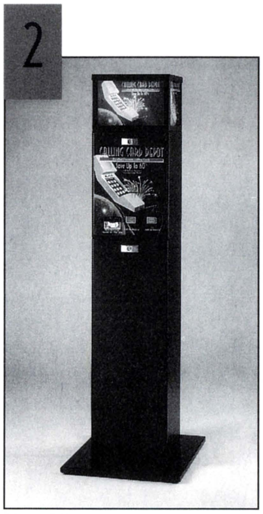


Model 801



Model 802

Model 803-D

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ample, what is it like to hit the 'Special When Lit' and see and feel the crack of the knocker assembly? What is it like to travel along with the ball as it bounces through the highly unpredictable playfield of targets, ramps, bumpers, sling shot kickers, etc.? This is what we wanted to bring straight to the viewer."

The director enlisted a unique device created by co-producer Howard Cook that achieved that goal. Cook's invention cradles the ball in front of the lens of a lipstick camera. The resulting visual is a cinematic first. The viewer travels along with the ball at playfield level, smacking into drop targets, careening through ramps, and bouncing off of rubber rings in true "you are there" action.

"The few things I've seen on television did not do justice to this fascinating topic," Helms asserted. The rich history wasn't appreciated or even recognized. I knew that our creative team—co-producers Howard Cook, David Fisher, and Peter Chung—possessed the extensive experience in television specials that would turn this concept into a 'hit.' The response nationally and from overseas markets indicates it has reached that status!"

> ***"This is the first seriously fun and expertly mounted video project that chronicles the subject of pinball."***

The film has reached hit status due in no small way to the fact that Helms began his tale at the beginning. From its 18th century roots to the plink-plunk marble games of the '30s and beyond, all pinball eras are represented by the machines themselves. From coast to coast, collection to collection, the autuer poked his camera where none before dared venture. In doing so, he captured a non-stop parade of rare and exquisite machines, delivering privileged peeks into private collections.

"I received enormous help from the entire collecting and industry community. The people behind the scenes included Joe Kaminkow and Gary Stern of Sega Pinball, Patrick Fitzgerald of Williams, the entire Gottlieb family, and Mike Pacak and Rob Berk of Pinball Expo. There were so many more," Helms graciously added.

"Pleasure Machines" will undoubtedly become the entertainment yardstick by which all other coin-op programs will be measured. Should this prediction come true, Helms faces an even greater challenge. Why? Because, he told us, "part two is coming soon!""

Tapes are available directly from the production company. Send a check or money order for $24.95 plus $3.95 shipping and handling to New Video Images, 90 Shirley Ave., Revere, MA 02151. For credit card orders call toll-free (800)PIN-VIDEO. ▲

Tim Ferrante is publisher and editor of GameRoom, a 68-page monthly magazine targeted at the home coin-op collector marketplace. It covers pinball machines, jukeboxes, arcade video, soda pop, slots, and more. Subscriptions are $28 per year (12 issues). For more information, contact GameRoom Magazine, P.O. Box 41, Keyport, NJ 07735-0041; (732) 739-1955; fax (732) 739-2834.

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SOFTWARE
UPDATE

Companies look at MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE for TODAY and TOMORROW

As part of our focus on the tax and management challenges that face small business owners, we touched base with a number of companies that design, develop, and market management software for arcades, family entertainment centers, and route operations. Here are our questions and the answers we received.

1. How does your product differ in features, functions, etc. from that same product one or two years ago? What accounts for these changes: technology, customer needs, etc?

2. How do you see future versions of your product over the next two years, five years, and beyond?

COIN CONNEXION

1. Numerous enhancements to our route-management software have been developed, and we introduced a new handheld-computer system for on-location data collection. Upgrades to the software include the addition of reports such as the Wal-Mart reports, Best Vendors reports, and South Carolina Quarterly Reports to automate these time-consuming tasks.

New executive displays have been added to allow operators to get more instant information about their business including a history of earnings by location or any group of machines, rankings of any group of machines, payout analysis on pokers or redemption pieces, cost-of-sales information on cranes and cigarette machines, and more. New functions include a fixed asset manager, user-defined report generator, and a general ledger. A major upgrade to the CD management system provides a database of over 30,000 CDs and 45s and over 100,000 song titles. This drastically reduces the amount of data entry required to track CD inventory and print title strips. All of our route-management systems have now been updated to transition smoothly through the year 2000.

Coin ConneXion also released in 1997 the Wand-Based Field Data Collection System. This system utilizes the Dolphin Handheld computer from Handheld Products and a belt-mounted, wireless receipt printer from O'Neil. It eliminates printed collection tickets, manual calculations (and errors) on-site, and most importantly, eliminates data entry back at the office. The O'Neil printer enables operators to leave a detailed, customized receipt with the location.

Most of the changes that are now being made are initiated by customer requests. This development of the wand-based field data collection system resulted from a combination of customer requests and new technology in the Dolphin handheld computer which became available in early 1997.

2. We see a trend toward more and more automation. In the near future, a very high percentage of manual activities required anywhere in an operator's business will be automated, either by computer software or handheld computers. Handheld computers will become the rule rather than the exception due to the improvements in efficiency and savings in time and money that they provide.

We will continue to add new features to our software to make sure we always have the most satisfied customers in the business. A number of new features are on the drawing board which will take route-management to the next level, providing intelligent tools for increased efficiency and profitability. Future versions of our software will become more Internet-friendly, giving operators highly secure access to their system from anywhere in the world to get information, print reports, or enter data.

John Mette

SILENT PARTNER 2000

1. We came out about three months ago with a new version of our

Silent Partner software, Version 15, which now runs on Windows 95 or Windows NT. It is much more flexible because of the functions offered by Windows and it takes care of the potential problems posed by the four-digit date rollover in the year 2000.

It's not an update in the strict sense of the word or an old version squeezed into the Windows environment. We rewrote it from scratch, using everything we have learned over the last 11 or 12 years. We have between two and three dozen units out so far, and the response has been very positive both because of the features and because people have to switch to something before the year 2000.

There is an online help function and the new software offers much more flexible reports. There is no end of the year procedure; you can just proceed and the program in general terms helps you achieve what you need to do.

2. We don't plan the near future because nobody knows what technology will bring in five years. For the coming year or two, we plan to stay with the Windows platform. Before Windows, we could never think of doing many of the things we can now do. We have a whole new group of customers who are just starting to give us some feedback and we plan to respond to that input by adding new features as technology allows.

Len Smikun

SOFTWARE AT WORK

1. Some new features include calculating payroll load in real time, enabling manager overview of employee punch-in/punch-out, fixed scheduling, manual override of scheduling and vacation time, and manager messaging and log. An employee charge function has been added for facilities that do not let workers make purchases for cash, as well as an employee bonus money system that operates as a gift certificate. Customer scheduling has been beefed up to include deposits and charges with full accounting and statements.

Select account cards can be produced and sold with a magnetic stripe encoded on the card. They can provide access to special pricing and used as prepaid or debit cards or as a credit instrument. Full accounting, invoicing, and statements are available with this feature.

Consignment and accounting of ticketing and ticket percentages is available with full tracking of tickets that have been consigned to a remote location. This feature also includes full accounting, invoicing, and statements. Coupon tracking has been enhanced to include monitoring by code, source, or item couponed in order to avoid against any potential fraud and insure reconciliation with inventory.

Monitoring, tracking, and restocking of inventory is available from a local touch screen unit, which can also be used to audit game functions including revenue totals for each machine by area and type. The system can also rank top five and bottom five game earners.

New scheduling features allow events to be planed according to time and/or location availability, while rentals can be tracked according to time and date or type of products that have been rented out and controlled through the use of magnetic swipe cards.

Our software can also calculate revenue figures and track items such as coin changers, point-of-sale token dispensers, employee tools, maintenance schedules and inventory, safety checks, special access control, and security.

2. We are presently working on a stand-alone kiosk for ticket, arm band, and token dispensing with credit, debit, and bill acceptor. The improvements for future versions of our software will be driven by feedback from our customers and our own imaginations. ▲

Jerry Foote

SOFTWARE AT A GLANCE

Here's a list of companies that provide management software for the amusement, vending, and entertainment industry:

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Web site (http://www.coincnx.com)

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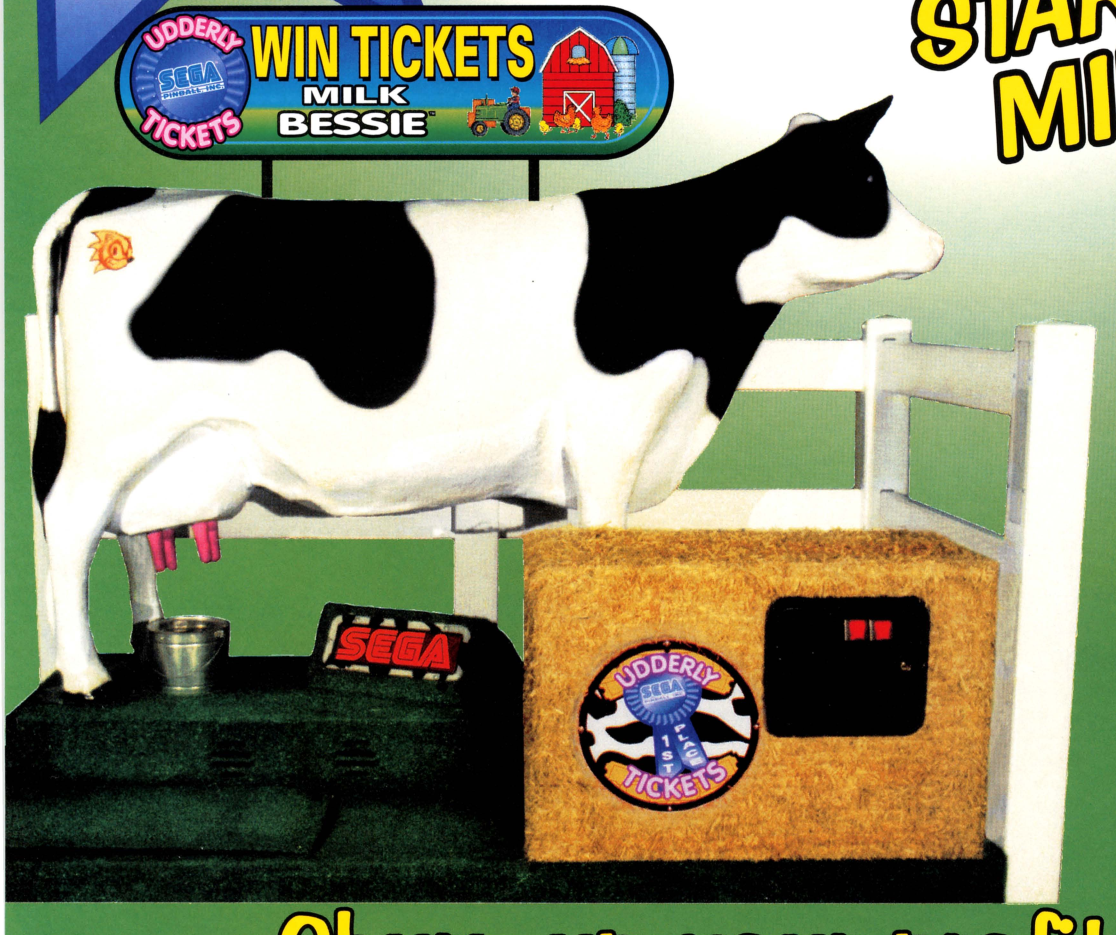

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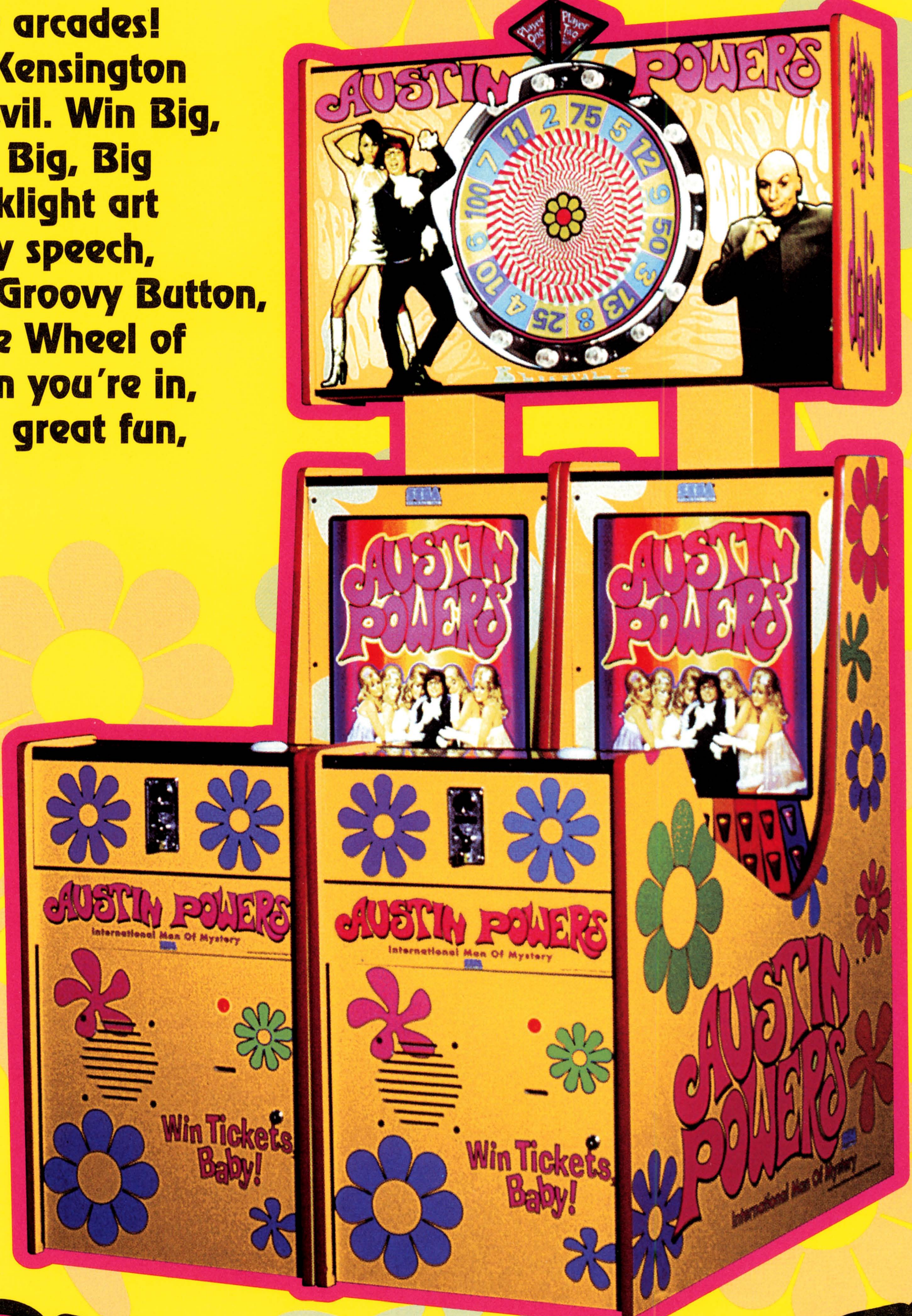
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FROM LEFT
FIELD

An Internet survey of one's own

Steve White
Special Projects Editor

This month marks the half-year anniversary of Play Meter's drive to create a significant presence on the Internet, and our Web site is sporting a new look! We recently presented a redesigned home page that utilizes frames, allowing readers to move more easily between the different departments available in cyberspace.

The menu frame on the left hand side of the page remains constant for those of you unfamiliar with this type of Web page, while the choice selected from this menu appears on the right hand side of your computer screen, eliminating the need to navigate between pages just to return to the menu bar.

We began the Internet project last year with the idea of using our Web site to provide regularly updated material for our readers, material that had come to our attention after the magazine had already gone to bed but before it had reached your mailboxes.

Thus, Play Meter News Now was born. While our presence on the Internet dates back close to three years, the advent of News Now brought us in line with the evolving philosophy of other Internet content providers–whether they were an organ of an existing print magazine or an exclusively online publication–to constantly update.

Since August when News Now first appeared, we have been working hard to refine our Internet strategy. News Now is updated once a week, and gives operators an edge by providing the most-up-to-date news including industry developments, trade show coverage, and factory and distributor updates. It is the keystone of our Web presence and the first thing you find when traveling to www.playmeter.com.

Loyal subscribers get a preview of what is to come in their next issue, and would-be readers are able to sample the flavor of our 24-years-young publication. In addition to News Now, our Web site contains an updated industry calendar, links to related sites, and sample material from the current issue including excerpts from special sections, all three editorials, a shortened version of our Equipment Poll, and a look at the front cover.

Not long after News Now was launched, Play Meter also embarked on a survey of our readers, a survey which all of you received and many of you were kind enough to return with your honest thoughts and comments about our publication. As you may have noticed, we are already responding to those comments with more focus on the issues that most concern our operator subscribers.

Of those who completed the survey, 42 percent said they visited industry trade publication Web sites including ours, a figure that was pleasantly surprising. So this month, I have decided to conduct an informal survey of my own. Here's the list of questions I would like to pose to you:

1. **Did you already know that News Now is updated weekly? Is that often enough?**
2. **How often do you visit Play Meter's Web site?**
3. **Do you prefer any other industry Web sites to Play Meter's?**
4. **What other material would you like to see on Play Meter's Web site?**
5. **How could Play Meter's Web site further assist you in your business?**

I look forward to hearing your responses. As always, our job first and foremost is to serve our operator readers who have been loyal subscribers. Beyond that, we are always looking for new readers interested in the business of the coin-op amusement industry.

Send me your comments via e-mail (news@playmeter.com) or fax, (504)488-7083, or do it the old fashioned way and just pick up the phone and give me a call, (504)488-7003. Happy Internet surfing, and don't forget to visit our online home (http://www.playmeter.com). ▲

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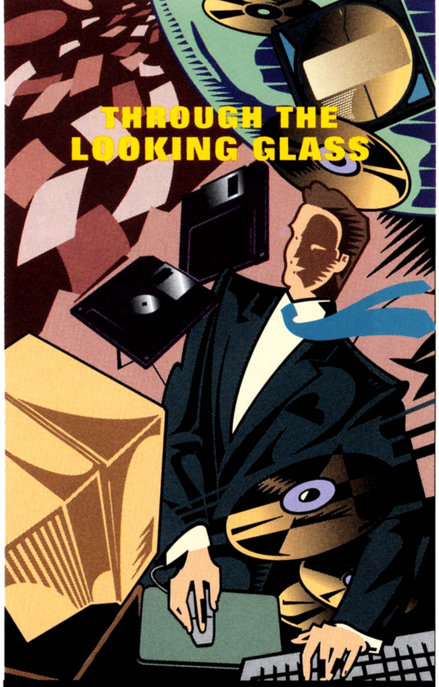

STEVE WHITE

How would you like to see, at any moment, how one of your machines is performing? What if you could do it in real-time figures—without having to run wires to each unit? While it may sound like the stuff of science fiction, this type of on-the-spot communication and information flow is currently available through a device introduced little more than a year ago by Florida-based Goal Industries.

Goal's AccuData Link (ADL) is based on new spread technology and uses existing phone lines to transmit data to a remote location, according to company president A.J. Kress, son of industry veteran and Benchmark Entertainment president Al Kress.

"AccuData was created for the amusement and vending machine industry to help the operator better control costs and profitability," Kress said. "In an increasingly competitive marketplace everyone needs to have an edge on his competition. The advantage to our system is you only need one phone line."

How it works

Installed into every machine is an AccuData Link Game Interface, which collects data from the machine. The machine is plugged into the ADL, which is then plugged into the wall receptacle. Data is encoded into packets of information and sent out over the power line.

Goal's AccuData Link Communicator is also plugged into the power line in order to read the encoded information and then do one of two things: 1) store it in memory until the host computer calls for it; or 2) decide that the data represents an alarm event. In the latter case, the Communicator automatically calls the host computer. In addition to calling the host computer, the ADL Communicator can be programmed to call a fax machine or an alphanumeric pager. Each ADL Communicator can handle up to 200 machines within one location..

The host computer, which can be located anywhere, requires ADL software, which is limited to the number of locations only by the amount of disk space.

Operators are evenly split, Kress said, in the way they use the ADL. "It's about 50/50," he said. "Some are using it because they want to know how much cash is in the machine, but they are also using it to detect problems in the location."

The details

Once an ADL is installed into a game, it can monitor up to eight inputs and outputs. According to Kress, those eight outputs are typically items such as: coin/token in, cash box door openings, service door openings, tickets out, coin/token out, etc. All of these events are day and time stamped for added security. Inputs are commonly used for issuing free credits and free tickets.

When monitoring coins in, parameters can be set in the software that allows operators to specify how many coins should be "dropped" within a certain time frame. If a machine falls below that level, the ADL will send out an alarm to the host computer or alphanumeric pager. Likewise, if a ticket level becomes low an alarm event occurs. This lets the operator know whether or not a game is functioning properly. Machines can also be remotely turned on or off.

In many cases this will eliminate the need to send a repair person to the facility.

As an option to the system, operators can purchase an ADL Game Alarm that plugs directly into the unit's game interface. With the addition of this option, an alarm is sent out to the host computer if someone breaks into a game. This service is available as a stand-alone option.

Goal also offers cellular service to

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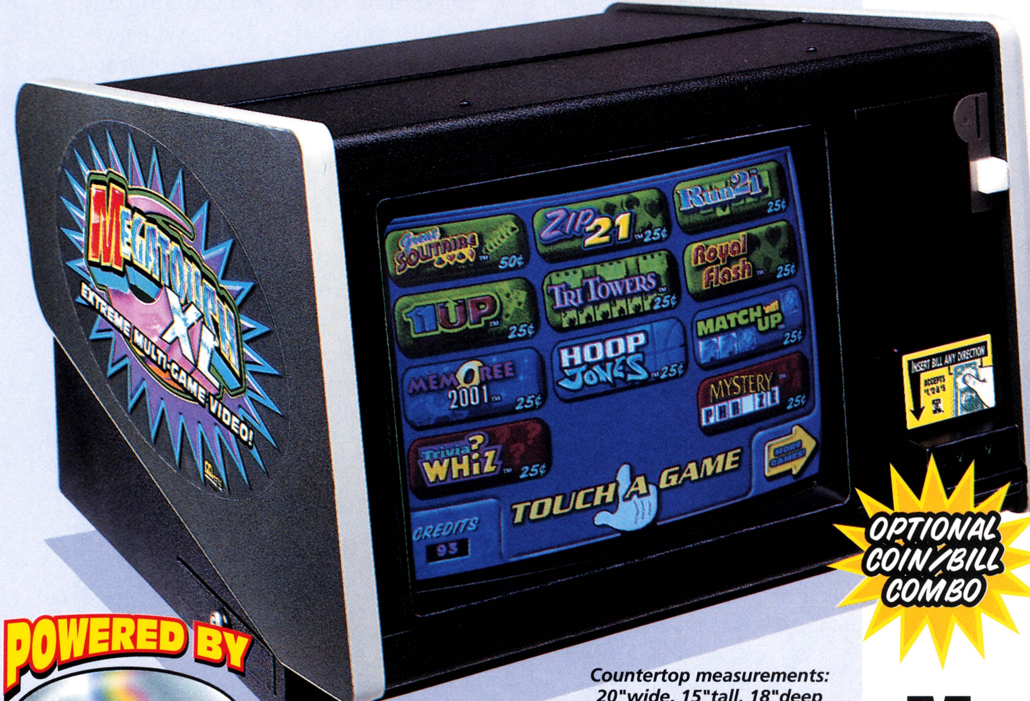
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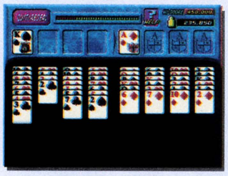

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"The same technology will be applied to a debit system and it will be 100 percent wireless, which is a big, big factor."

its customers. The advantage of cellular is tremendous, Kress said, because the company's Cellular Digital Packet Data is similar to cellular phone rates except that rates are based on data transmitted rather than airtime. The cost of service is actually less than a landline, and the phone can easily be moved to a new location. ADL data is automatically downloaded after the call is placed so there is no wasted airtime.

BILL CHANGERS

When an ADL is placed into a bill changer, cash accountability becomes a reality.

The unit has the ability to monitor all aspects of the changer including door openings and currency levels. Most importantly, the ADL can be programmed to "watch" coin levels; when they drop below a specified level the ADL will send out an alarm. This means that customers will no longer have to seek out an attendant in order to get change. The machine will also allow operators to monitor how many coins are left in each hopper and when a stacker is full.

Goal has worked closely with Rowe International to provide an interface that will allow the operator to view all of a Rowe bill changer's diagnostic commands remotely. For example, they can monitor how much of each denomination has gone into the machine as well as the payout from any particular hopper. The ADL can also explain why a bill was rejected, what the last bill in was, and how many coins were paid out and from which hoppers. This kind of accountability is available on Rowe's BC-3500, BC-1500, and BC-100, although such services are not limited to Rowe machines.

VENDING MACHINES

Goal now offers an interface to monitor vending machines, which functions in the same manner as the ADL Game Interface on the bill changers. It allows an operator to view all error and diagnostic codes as well as inventory, currency status, and product levels.

It also allows route drivers to view product inventory before they enter a building, thereby providing them the necessary information on what products to bring into the location. This feature is available on all vending machines that use the NAMA standard DEX/UCS.

VIDEO POKERS AND SLOTS

The ADL monitors gaming units not unlike the way it works with amusement video games. All of the information including plays, cash in, payouts, and payout percentages can be monitored. Through power line management, games can also be turned on and off according to the time of day to comply with certain laws.

CARNIVAL/MIDWAY GAMES

According to Kress, the ADL is particularly useful in solving the difficulty of cash control posed by carnival/midway games. The operator can remotely monitor how many games are actually played as well as how much cash should be turned in at the end of the day. With the use of the ADL Game Alarm and a special cellular modem from Goal, operators will be able to know where their trailer is at any given time and how much money it is earning. Goal has also been working closely with Denny's Electronics to develop a board that will monitor all of their diagnostic controls.

THE FUTURE

At press time, Goal was working on several hot projects including a camera to help complete surveillance needs and a global plotting system used in service vehicles to track route employees.

In addition, Kress said the company intends to introduce a "debit-type system" in late spring that can be operated in conjunction with ADL. "The same technology will be applied to a debit system and it will be 100 percent wireless, which is a big, big factor," he said. "A lot of the problem with other systems is you have to link all the machines so it's tough to move them around."

For more information, contact Goal Industries, (888)884-4625; Web site (http://www.goalindustries.com). ▲

namco
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3911
Tired Of This

Goal Industries' Heather Baldwin and A.J. Kress show off the first place award won by AccuData Link at IAAPA '97 for revenue and admission control devices.

THE ART *of* Software DEVELOPMENT *at* Premier Data

Premier Data Corp. has a philosophy that can be summed up in four words: expertise, endurance, quality, and accuracy. Don Waldron and Uzay Togay agreed to build Premier Data on these key elements when they came together in 1994 to establish the company. And they haven't wavered in offering their customers all four.

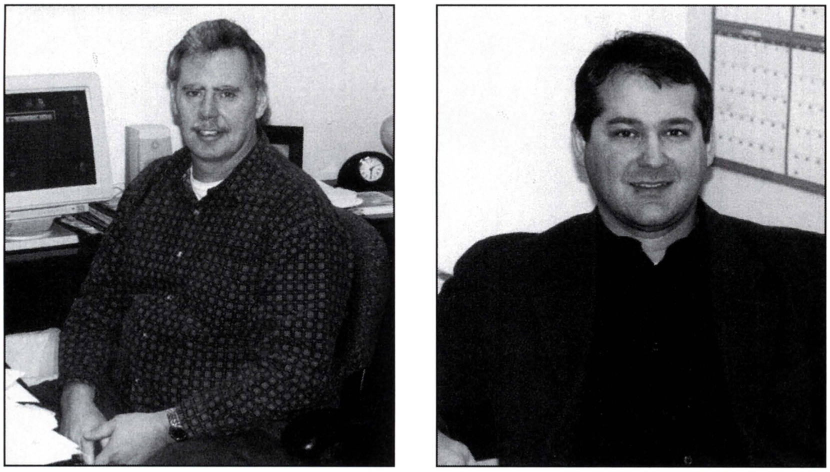
Waldron's 20 years of industry experience and Togay's engineering and finance background created a business foundation bound for success. Their combined knowledge, skills, and vast experience create positive and practical software solutions for the coin-op industry. "We have assembled a staff with extensive backgrounds in the coin-op industry, computer science, software engineering, customer service, marketing, and advertising. This enables us to provide superior products to our customers," stated Waldron, PDC's president.

PDC understands that a new era in technology has evolved, and in its wake a rapidly changing world. The key to success in this Information Age is endurance, as Togay, chief engineer and general manager, explained, "Blending the latest technologies with steadfast service and dependability is fundamental to PDC's business strategy."

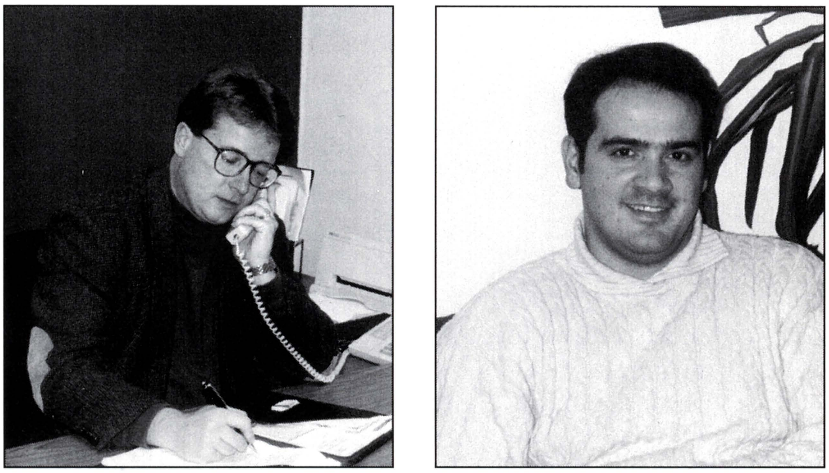
At the beginning of PDC's journey, the most challenging task was defining customers' needs and creating a product to match. The company's ability to accurately research the needs of the industry and then design its products to meet those needs allowed PDC to achieve unparalleled accuracy and quality. A comprehensive product offering includes professional manuals, extensive on line help, and knowledgeable technical support, as well as a user-friendly interface. These attributes are indispensable to quality software, and PDC describes them as its distinct advantage in the coin-op software arena.

TODAY'S OUTLOOK...

Premier Data Corp. offers a variety of software products for the amusement, arcade, and vending industries. For instance, PDC observed that it was the first company to offer a software product truly designed for the Microsoft Windows operating system. These specially designed software applications give users the familiar ease of using the Windows environment.



TOP LEFT: President Don Waldron
TOP RIGHT: Senior analyst/manager Uzay Togay



MIDDLE LEFT: Marketing manager Al Gietl
MIDDLE RIGHT: Programmer Can Ulker

BOTTOM LEFT: Receptionist Tiffney Moroney
BOTTOM RIGHT: Receptionist Jennifer Sprinkle

PDC's flagship product is Super Route Manager '97. The company describes it as the most complete and easy to use coin-op management software available today. SRM '97 helps simplify and automate arcade, family entertainment center (FEC), street route, vending, and office operations.

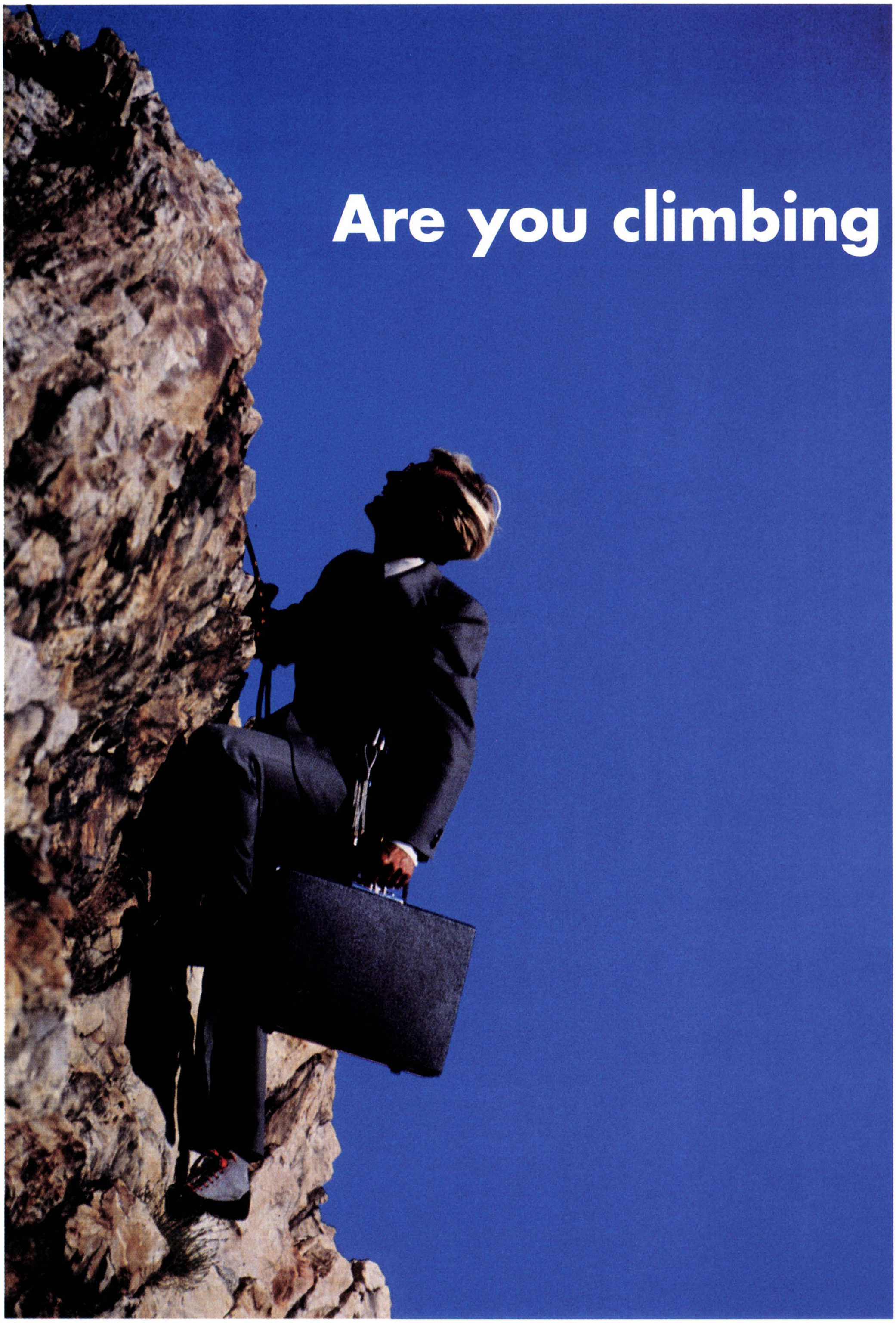
Super Route Manager '97 records data about locations, machines, splits/commissions, licenses, loans, and other essential business information. In daily operations, the user has the ability to enter collection, rotation, or service information. These modules are integrated to provide the financial data necessary for the operator to make vital business decisions. SRM '97 has the flexibility to accommodate different aspects of each industry. The focus is on the unique business needs associated with tracking every coin/token, plush, or vending product.

For instance, a vending operator can track meter readings as well as the product inventory; an arcade operator can track token-related operations. Tracking information from the field, remote reporting, portable computers, and written tickets are available as companion products to SRM '97.

The SRM family of products includes portable field-based hardware and software for route personnel called Field Manager '97, the remote version of SRM '97. It includes collection, rotation, and service modules. The route data is downloaded to the remote device by either modem or a serial cable at the home office. When the route work is finished, the results are uploaded to the home office creating a paperless transaction.

Premier Data offers electronic meter polling for arcades and routes using the DataEye modules and Compuline meter interfaces. This is a great solution for remote polling using DataEye's hardware and Premier Data software. This technology allows the user to dial up a remote location and receive real-time meter readings and upload them into SRM '97. The Compuline product uses infrared meters on the route to transmit accurate meter readings into a hand held computer. These readings are then uploaded into SRM '97 assuring accurate meter readings.

CD Manager is a companion product developed by Premier Data to enhance the amusement operator's accountability. The CD Manager '97 (CDM '97) module is a CD inventory tracking system designed for jukebox operators. Using a barcode scanner, he scans the barcode from the artwork of a jewel case. This software offers a database of 32,000 titles, courtesy of ATM Distributing. After scanning in their entire inventory, operators can account for every CD in their jukeboxes and in their warehouses. The ability to use the Internet to link with CD vendor ATM Dis-



Are you climbing mountains that you don't need to?

Premier Data Corporation, the company that offers scalable software solutions to the coin-op industry, wants you to know that you don't have to climb the mountain to enjoy the view from the top. In anticipation of your needs—from route and arcade management software to customization, from desktop to client/server solutions—we are working hard to make your business decisions easy. Premier Data Corporation providing a new generation of software.

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tributing is standard on CDM '97. Operators can download charts and order CDs from ATM's Web site. As an outgrowth of this relationship, ATM has run a promotion that helps operators finance the CDM '97 software.

TOMORROW BRINGS ...

At Premier Data, tomorrow is already here. The software development team is using state-of-the-art technology to design tomorrow's products. One ideal example is the Super Route Manager '97 Client/Server suite. It utilizes the maximum potential of both hardware and software components. The Client/Server suite enhances Super Route Manager '97's data base, enabling faster response time, stability, and greater throughput.

The Client/Server suite comes in two parts—Headquarters and Branch editions. The Headquarters edition is used at the corporate office, whereas the location uses the Branch edition. Headquarters edition processes all the data related to the corporate office and the Branch edition processes only the data related to the location. Both of those programs work as stand-alone products; the data in the two sites can be synchronized at any given time. Synchronization involves the two editions determining the revised data since the previous process, and exchanging the new and/or modified information. A scheduling system is provided in the program to perform this synchronization operation automatically. This in itself, explained PDC, is a unique technological solution.

"We are frequently asked whether our software is year 2000 compliant. Our answer is a resounding yes! There are many operators using DOS-based programs that will have major problems. For our customers this will not be an issue!"

The Internet is the future of software development and PDC has already outlined its plans to utilize Internet-related technologies. The evolution of PDC products—from the desktop version to the Client/Server edition—will be taken a step further with an Internet-based version.

"Hardware and software consulting has enabled Premier Data Corp. to become one of the leaders in coin-op management," said Al Gietl, marketing manager. "We learn how operators do business. That is the only way we can advise them on the best product for their businesses."

Software development generates its own opportunities as Premier Data found out when it was approached to do custom work for both operators and coin-op manufacturers. The company admits it's learned a lot in the process. "The customization business has been important to us," adds Waldron. "One thing that helped us become an even better vendor is that we developed insight into all of the manufacturers', distributors', and operators' businesses that we worked with. Often enough, we've been able to learn something from an operator or manufacturer that is applicable to the rest of the industry. Using this information, Premier Data is already expanding its resources to provide custom development for many of the well-known companies in the industry."

GOOD AFTER 2000...

As the next century approaches, everyone who uses a computer has been talking about what will happen when the year 2000 comes. Compliant software is a common concern. "We are frequently asked whether our software is year 2000 compliant. Our answer is a resounding yes! Our software was designed with complete, four-digit year fields to help our clients contend with not only the change of the century, but also with the next millennium and beyond. There are many operators using DOS-based programs that will have major problems. For our customers this will not be an issue!" Gietl emphasized.

Here's the explanation of how this happened. The year 2000 problem is mainly an issue for companies that have been relying on software that was designed when computers were relatively expensive. Back then, data elements were reduced to initials and abbreviations whenever possible to reduce memory costs. Naturally, year notations were shortened using two digits, such as 97 for the current year. This becomes a problem in the next century because with only two digits, in 2000 the year data becomes 00.

One of the most challenging tasks for any company is providing knowledgeable technical support after the sale. No one takes this more seriously than PDC. Kim DeStasio, director of technical support, detailed, "The philosophy behind technical support at PDC is to continually enhance support and training services by providing accurate and timely solutions.We accomplish this with team cooperation, unique skills and talents, and a common goal of complete customer satisfaction. The future of quality technical support and the ultimate success of the company depends on understanding the importance of the interaction between the customer and the technical support staff. The basic premise is that quality technical support is value added to the product."

FINAL THOUGHTS...

The coin-op industry's demands have intensified due to the increase in the technology used in this sector of business. Keeping that fact in mind, it is challenging to be a part of an ever-evolving industry. As software engineer Kurtulus Izzetoglu explained, "We are well aware of how complex this industry is. We understand the role our software plays within it. Furthermore, our products and our qualified staff encourage us to position PDC in the center of the overall picture." ▲

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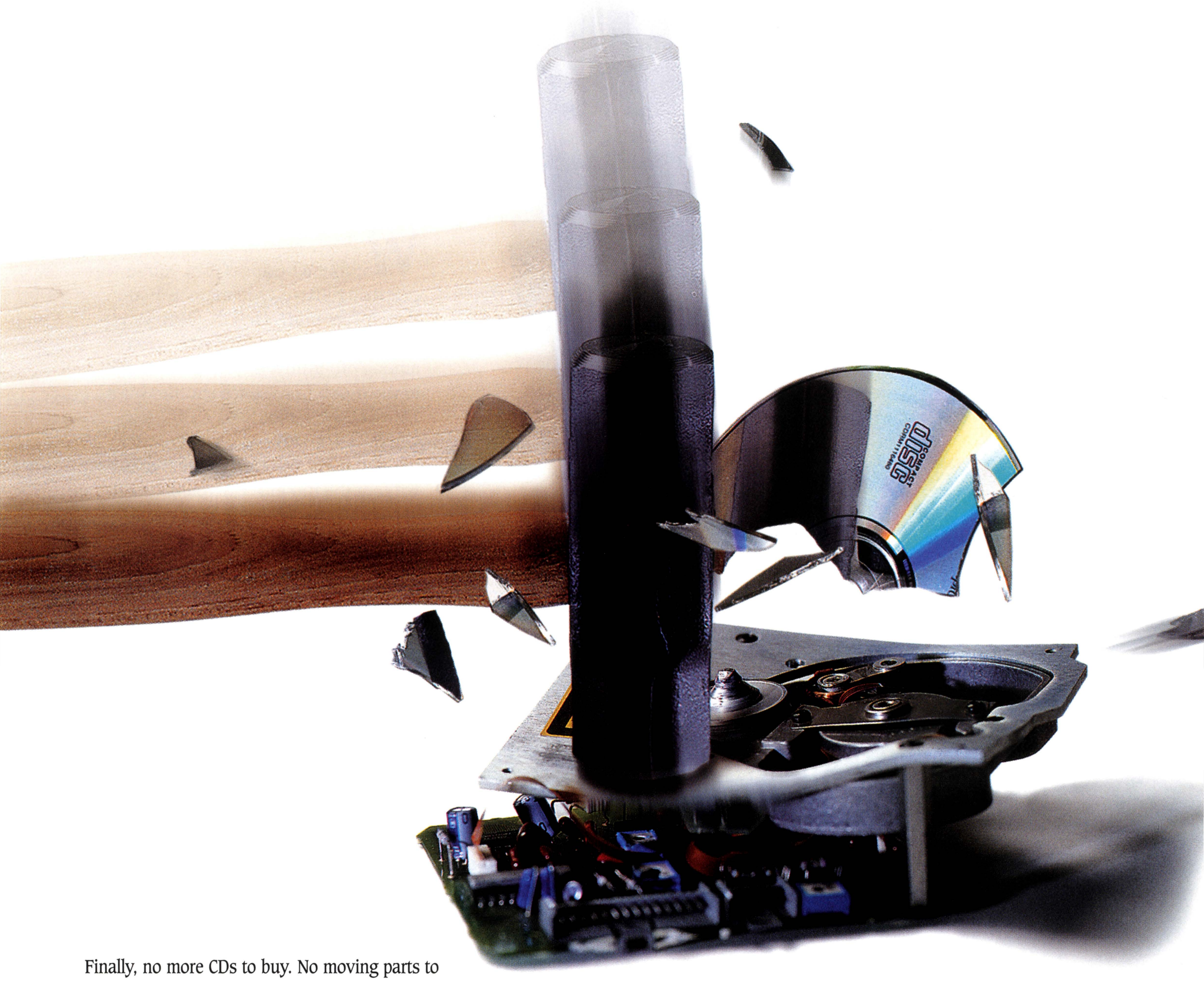

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Channing Hayden

BUSINESS PLANS:

who needs 'em?

EVERY ORGANIZATION NEEDS A BUSINESS PLAN. A WELL-DEVISED PLAN INCREASES YOUR ODDS OF SUCCESS.

Without a business plan you're practicing Jules Verne management. Remember him? He's the 19th century science fiction author who wrote, among other novels, "From the Earth to the Moon." His space shuttle was a BIG BULLET shot from a BIG, BIG, CANNON, and his astronauts, in top hat and spats, traveled to the moon without the modern conveniences of life-support systems, rocket engines, computers, and earth communications. You can't blame Verne for being so foolish. He didn't have 20th century science to guide his imagination. But if you use the equivalent of 19th century management and operate without a business plan when state-of-the-art business thinking says otherwise, the blame for your company's problems falls squarely on you.

WHY MANAGERS FAIL TO PLAN

Ask managers or business owners why they don't plan and the number one reason is that it takes too much time. Given the choice of immediately impacting the bottom line or sitting around and thinking (planning), most managers choose action every time.

There's always more things for us to do than time to do them. Early in our careers we learned: don't just sit there, do something. Over time, inactivity has come to mean that we're not doing our job. Given what we've learned, camping in a chair wondering where the company should be a year or five years from now can't be our re-

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sponsibility. It's too contrary to the frenetic, action-packed, hectic pace we've come to expect in our lives. But such solitary contemplation is an important part of a manager's trade. Without it we're reduced to fireman, rushing from one emergency to the next, too engrossed in dodging punches to throw a few of our own. Well-run businesses are not reactive but proactive. Managers must take the time to seize their future by the throat and decide how to shake it into what they want.

Another reason managers don't plan is that the payback is long term and we've been conditioned to focus on short-run results. Meeting this month's sales quota and worrying about the quarterly P & L statement has much more immediacy than the problems we'll face when our current product or service becomes obsolete. Yet, depending where our product or service is in its life cycle, avoiding such questions may mean that one day soon there is no sales quota to meet and the quarterly profit statement shows a big goose egg, if not a loss.

Finally, some managers and business owners don't plan because it's risky. It requires committing a department, division, or your whole company to a course of action in a high-stakes game where the outcome is unsure. Look what happened when Coca-Cola changed its formula. And for those old enough to remember, what about the Ford Edsel? Ford Motor Co. lost the equivalent of $1.4 billion in today's dollars during that debacle.

There are no guarantees. No one can promise a plan won't fail. Many managers believe it's better to hope for a good broken-field run than to go into the game with a plan. That's wrong. A broken-field touchdown is an opportunity any good coach hopes for and trains his running backs to grab, but no coach goes into the game assuming a break like that will automatically come along. A good coach has a game plan, and there are several reasons for a good manager or business owner to have one too.

> “WITHOUT STANDARDS IN THE FORM OF OVERALL COMPANY OBJECTIVES, YOU CAN'T DECIDE IF YOUR BUSINESS IS ON TRACK.”

THE BENEFITS OF PLANNING

☛ **Controlling your company:** If one characteristic defines managers more than any other, it's that he exercises control over the organization. Not the bend-'em-to-my-will kind of control, but guiding the company toward its goals. Such control requires a three-step process: 1) establish a standard, 2) compare performance to the standard, and 3) take corrective action when performance deviates too far from standard.

The foundation of the control process is the standard. Without standards in the form of overall company objectives, you can't decide if your business is on track. Your business plan provides specific direction on where you want your company to go and will become the standard against which your company's performance is measured.

☛ **Training:** As a manager, and especially as a business owner, you must provide your employees with a shared vision of the direction you've chosen for the company. To be effective, this vision must be specific in order to guide your employees and help them define the goals they must achieve in order for you to reach yours. Only by providing a specific plan can you and your employees strive for a common goal.

☛ **Obtaining financing:** Most businesses need capital. The first question from a lending institution will probably be: What's your plan? It's a reasonable request, for two reasons. First, it's natural for people to want to know how their money is being spent. Second, they want to know if you are the person they should trust to spend it. Have you thought the project through? Do you know what you're doing? Have you identified potential problems and developed methods for turning those lemons into lemonade?

Most small and mid-sized business owners would rather have a tooth pulled without an anesthetic than look for financing. Why? The general feeling is, it's such a hassle: “The bank wants to know everything. And whatever I give 'em, it's not enough. They want more.” That's an unrealistic attitude.

Those of us who have survived our children's teenage years have each faced a time when they wanted money, lots of money. Usually to buy a car (sometimes, God forbid, a motorcycle). At some point during the Great Debate that erupts over the issue, little Sam or Sally makes a fatal error and says, “But I'll pay you back!”

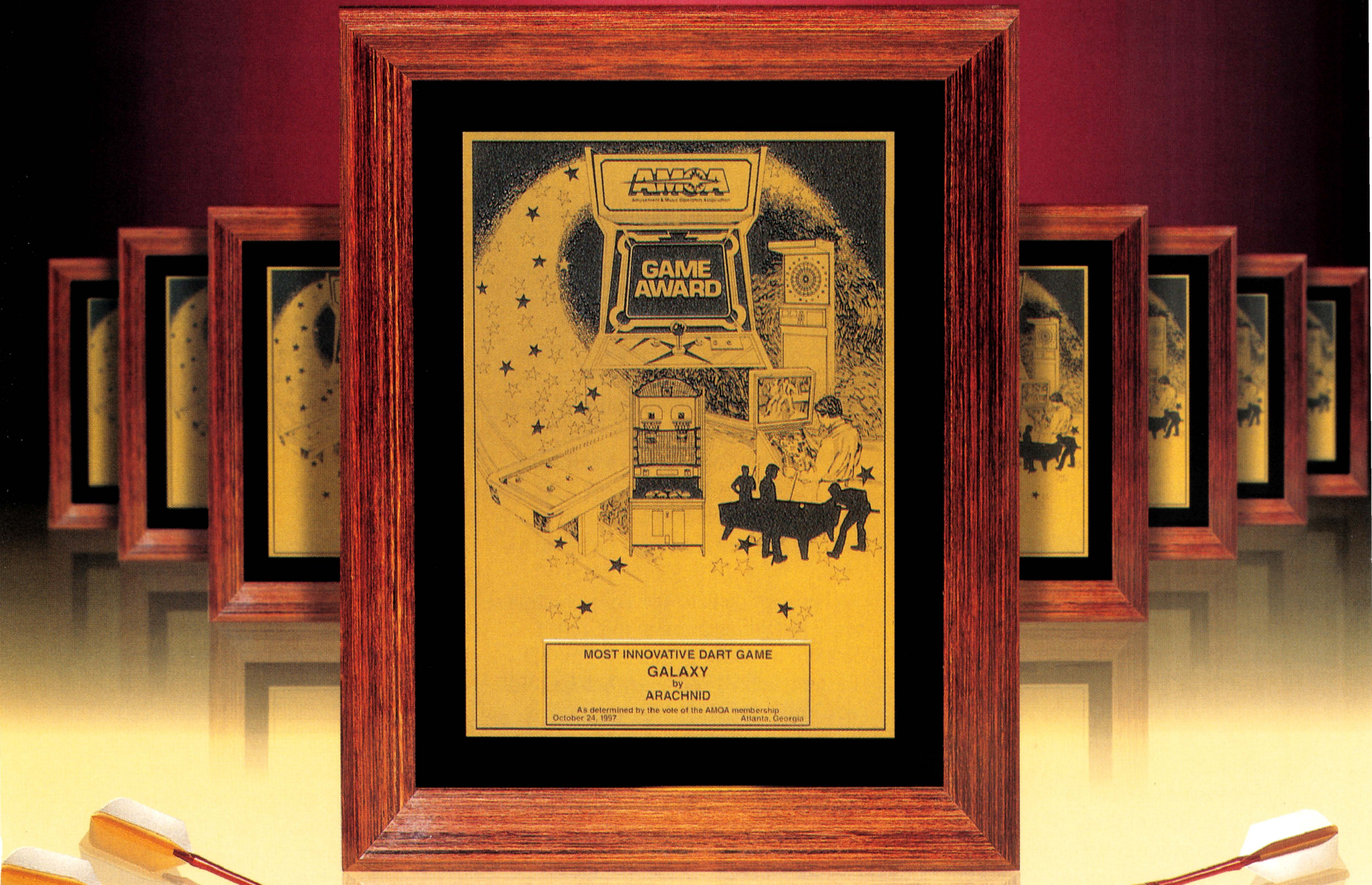
WHY SOME MANAGERS DON'T PLAN

1. Time is a manager's most precious resource and can't be wasted on thinking when there's work to be done.

2. Planning requires a shift in thinking from tangible, present, concrete problems to intangible, future, abstract problems.

3. Planning's payback is long term and most managers are trained to focus on short-term results because that's how they're rewarded.

8 YEARS IN A ROW– 8 AWARDS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Then, like the heat-seeking, laser-guided parent we all are, mom or pop swoops down to blow the kid out of the water. "And, pray tell, just how do you propose to do that?" The response: "I'll get a job."

After a long lecture on minimum wage and the few hours available to work considering school and homework, mom asks, "So how much do you think you'll make after taxes?"

"Jeez! I don't have to pay taxes, too, do I? I'm not old enough to pay income tax!"

Most of us have been on one side or the other of that drill. The point is, why do you think it's OK to sound like your kids when applying for a loan? A solid, well thought out business plan will make you appear professional and competent, just the kind of person banks love as borrowers.

ELEMENTS OF A BUSINESS PLAN

A good business plan provides:

1. Executive Summary
2. Background and Description of the Business
3. Company Organization
4. Condition Analysis
5. Obstacles and Opportunities Facing the Company
6. Company Goals
7. Marketing Plan
8. Company's Budgets
9. Company's Financial Plans
10. Timetable for Implementation

Let's see how to write a business plan by looking at each element:

☛ **Executive Summary:** This first section is written last. The executive summary presents the gist of your business plan in as few paragraphs as possible. Try for one paragraph for each major section in the plan. That's an ideal that might not be possible to achieve in a complex plan, but it gives you a target to shoot for.

The summary shouldn't be written until you've polished the other parts of your plan to perfection. What will be the major contributions of you and your key employees to your organization? What opportunities do you foresee for the company? What are the broad strokes of your marketing strategy, etc.? Until you've refined the major components of your plan, you can't condense them.

Don't skip the executive summary. It accomplishes two purposes. The first relates to the training and shared vision objectives of writing a business plan.

Those of us who served in the military know their training method: 1) Tell 'em whatcha gonna tell 'em, 2) Tell 'em, and 3) Tell 'em whatcha told 'em. Repetition helps learning. "Tell 'em whatcha gonna tell 'em" is the first function of the executive summary. Employees get a basic overview of the objectives of your company and your vision for achieving them.

The summary's second mission is to help obtain financing. Investors might skip the details of your plan, but they'll always read the summary to get the flavor of your objectives, an overall view of your business and its possibilities, your financing needs, profit potential, repayment ability, etc.

Don't risk losing your financing by giving the executive summary a lick and a promise. It should be the grabber that sells you and your company to potential investors/lenders—or not. It may be your only chance to merchandise yourself and your company to a customer buying your view of the future and your ability to run a successful business. Give it all you've got!

☛ **Business Description:** The specifics of your company go here.

1. A description of your business. The more unusual, the more details necessary.

2. The structure of your company—sole proprietorship, partnership or corporation—and why that structure is best suited to the needs of your company and the market it serves.

3. The reasons your business will succeed. Why will customers do business with you rather than a competitor? Do you provide better service? Whatever the reasons for your anticipated success, explain them here.

4. Your background, especially the unique talents and knowledge you possess that gives your business a competitive edge.

In this section you're merchandising yourself too. Selling yourself that

Table 1 SAMPLE REMODELING BUDGET

Type of Expense	Amount of Expense per Month (or week) Before/After Opening							
	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3
Contractor	$5k		$5k		$5k			
Furniture and Fixtures			$7k		$3k			
Phone (System & Hookup)				$1.5k	$300			
Electric	$150	$300	$300	$300	$300			
Water	$150		$60		$60			
Lease	$1.5k	$1.5k	$1.5k	$1.5k	$1.5k			
Insurance	$2k							

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you've made the right choice by going into this business, selling your employees on your vision for the company, and selling potential investors/lenders that you and your business will succeed and they'll make money backing you.

☛ **Company Organization:** This section sets out exactly how your company is organized, even if the whole organization is only you. Include your resume and the resumes of all your key employees including their special skills. (If the resumes are too lengthy, hit the high points here and include the details in an appendix.) Be specific. Focus only on those aspects of education, background, and experience that are relevant to the success of your company.

☛ **Condition Analysis:** Here discuss the environment in which your business will operate, plus any special conditions—pro and con—which may affect your company. Be especially honest when considering the hurdles you face. Realistically confronting and resolving the reasons you shouldn't operate this business is just as important as addressing the reasons you should. Such forethought prepares you for the problems to come. It also shows off your business skill/insight to employees and potential investors/lenders.

At the very least, the following areas should be covered in your condition analysis:

DEMAND—Address both the need for your product or service and how much of that need exists. Identify your customers and the potential for repeat sales if any.

TARGET MARKET—In what market do you intend to sell your product or service? The larger, the better. Or is it? Is there a niche in the market that no one else has discovered which you can fill? Market segmentation allows you to focus your resources on a specific portion of the market, making you stronger in that niche than your competition.

COMPETITION—Who is your competition? Don't limit your thinking to companies the same as yours. Your competition is not only other game rooms or FECs in the area, but any entertainment venues (movie theaters, video rentals, etc.). View your competition based on the consumer needs you fill and you may find you have more competition than you first thought.

When thinking about your competition, remember: it's interactive. If you do something to grab a hunk of the existing market, your competition will counterattack. Put yourself in the competition's shoes and decide how you would react to your success if you were them. Then decide how to counter their comeback. Think a few moves ahead, and write the strategy in your business plan.

In analyzing the competition, think through why the customer should patronize your business. There should be at least one reason (and more is better), or you shouldn't be in business. Include the reasons in your business plan so you and your employees remember to maximize them and potential investors/lenders know about them.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS—What are the legal constraints on your business? If you employ anyone, you'll need an employer I.D. number. Does state or local government require you to be licensed? In short, include any legal hoops through which your business must jump. Listing them in your business plan will help insure you don't overlook any, avoiding unnecessary expense and, perhaps, a great deal of grief in the future.

OTHER—Are there other important factors that should be considered? Will your location take six months to remodel? If so, where do you get the cash to support your family till the opening? These and other important factors should be noted and a plan developed to address them.

☛ **Obstacles and Opportunities:** The obstacles you face depend on the specifics of your situation. How you turn them into opportunities is a function of your creativity. In this section of your business plan list your lemons and your strategy for making lemonade.

☛ **Company Goals:** Goals should be stated in four areas: profitability, marketing, productivity, and physical/financial. Each goal should have one or more measures to gauge when the goal is met. For example, profitability could be measured by return on assets or return on net worth. (See "Mayday, mayday, my business is sinking," Play Meter February 1995, for more management ideas.)

Besides stating at least one objective in each of the four areas and including one measure for each objec-

THE FOUR BENEFITS OF A BUSINESS PLAN

1. Setting out the company's goals and objectives
2. Establishing a standard for company performance.
3. Training new employees while sharing your company vision with all employees
4. Obtaining investors

Even if your business is sufficiently capitalized, the first three benefits are reason enough to have a business plan. If you ever need additional financing, you'll already have a document that, with updating, will form the basis for seeking the required capital.

tive, watch out for incompatible goals. Will you have to cut your price to meet your objective, thereby affecting profitability? Be sure you don't have to sacrifice one of your stated objectives to reach another.

☛ **Marketing:** Though a specific strategy obviously must be customized for your particular needs, there are three general areas which should be covered in the marketing section of your business plan: product or service, price, and promotion. Not all will apply to every company.

THE PRODUCT COMPONENT–What is your product or service? When you define it, ask yourself: Does my company combine both?

Beyond defining your product and/or service, you must understand its life cycle. Each product or service goes through four distinct phases: introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. Manufacturing companies have long recognized the concept of product life cycle and constantly develop new products to substitute for those maturing or in decline.

Take a tip from retailers and wholesalers who instinctively update their inventory according to the latest fashion, technology, and/or consumer tastes. Twenty or 30 years ago a record store sold 45s, albums, eight-track tapes, and cassettes. In today's mainstream music store, the shelves are filled with products that didn't exist a generation ago–CDs and music videos. Retailers and wholesalers fend off the decline of their products or services by constantly re-inventing themselves through updating their inventory.

THE PRICE COMPONENT–There are three price strategies you can choose: higher than, lower than, or matching the competition. Each has implications you must carefully consider in order to choose the right one.

In the mind of the consumer, higher prices mean higher quality. If you choose a high-price (quality) strategy, everything about your operation–decor, how the staff dresses, etc.–must project that image.

A low-price approach is a market penetration strategy. When you enter a market where several competitors exist, the consumer needs a reason to patronize your business. If your game room or FEC is basically the same as the competition's–same redemption merchandise, same square footage, same available parking, etc.–lower prices may be the only way to lure customers from the competition.

A low-price strategy has disadvantages. If you're entering a market where the competition has built up a customer base, they may be financially stronger than you and can match or beat your price. If you continue lowering prices, they can too, and they may be able to outlast you. Entering an existing market also means you're dividing the same number of customers among more facilities. The combined effect of fewer customers and lower prices can be devastating for a start-up.

Because of the problems with a low-price strategy, you might choose other ways to compete. Think of how you can differentiate your location from the competition. Is your place larger, cleaner, and brighter? Do you have a greater selection of prize merchandise? Differentiation does not have to be based on price. Study the competition and define all the ways you can distinguish your business from theirs.

THE PROMOTIONAL COMPONENT: In considering how to promote a business, the owner's first reaction usually is: every way I can. That's not

Table 2 SAMPLE INCOME STATEMENT

Category	**Months (weeks) After Opening**										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Etc
Sales (after returns)											
Less Cost of Goods Sold											
Gross Profit											
Less Variable Costs											
Salaries											
Payroll Taxes											
Supplies											
Auto											
Interest Expense											
Etc.											
Less Fixed Costs											
Rent											
Insurance											
Depreciation											
Etc.											
Net Profit (loss) before Income Tax											

practical because a company usually doesn't have enough money to do it all. You must allocate your available funds between personal selling, sales promotion, and advertising.

You can choose to integrate personal selling into your organization in a variety of ways and with a great deal of latitude. Your sales force can be as basic as cashiers and attendants who greet and interact with customers. Before deciding, study the competition. Can you differentiate your operation from the competition by manipulating the personal selling variable? If your competition has a bare-bones staff, you might choose to employ sufficient staff to give the customer a higher degree of individual service.

Sales promotion can include everything from grand opening specials and good student discounts to tournaments and birthday party packages. Consider your market and decide what best appeals to your customer base. If you open an FEC, remember to promote hosting corporate events that can bring in added revenue.

Advertising encompasses decisions on which media to use (print, radio, billboards, etc.) and the advertising message—which may differ for each media depending on the target market (teenagers or parents of small children). Decisions in one of these areas affect the others because of limited resources. Whatever strategy you choose, your business plan is the place to think it through and lay it out for your employees and potential investors.

☛ **Budgeting:** A budget is a plan for spending funds allocated for a particular project. For our purposes, suppose you've decided to open an FEC and remodel an existing building using a general contractor. The contractor will want a down payment, a progress payment, and the remainder upon completion.

Using the form in Table 1, these disbursements should be entered in your FEC remodeling budget. (All budgets should use exactly the same form, either one similar to Table 1 or a design of your own. The reason will be explained later.) Other expenses might include furniture and fixtures, utilities, lease payments, insurance—all of which are entered in the Sample Remodeling Budget.

Create a similar budget for each activity required by your business plan. Though by no means an exhaustive list, other budgets might include: a sales budget, marketing budget (which may have sub-budgets for radio, print, and direct mail advertising), an administrative expense budget, a travel budget, and a miscellaneous expense budget.

If your business plan requires you to leave your current job, be sure to include your personal needs (rent, car payments, groceries, tuition, etc.) as part of budgeted salary expenses. Do the same for any partners or key employees your new venture must support. Many small companies have failed because the owners did not fund their own living expenses for the time it takes to get their business up and running.

Once all the individual activity budgets have been completed, they should be shown in your business plan and combined into your overall operating budget. This is why all budgets should be made in the same format. Assuming you're using the accrual method of accounting, your operating budget per period is the sum of the individual tax-deductible expenses for that period—for example, the first month after your FEC opens.

☛ **Financial Plan:** A financial plan consists of three parts: an income statement, cash flow projection, and

Table 3 CASH FLOW ANALYSIS

Category	Months (weeks) Before/After Opening										
	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3	4	5	Etc.
Beginning Cash											
+ Loans											
+ Cash Sales											
+ A/C Receivable Payments											
+ Other cash income											
Total Cash In											
- Repayment of loan principal											
- Interest payments											
- Salaries											
- Auto expenses											
- Payments to Contractor											
- all other cash expenses											
Ending Cash (Which becomes beginning cash for next period)											

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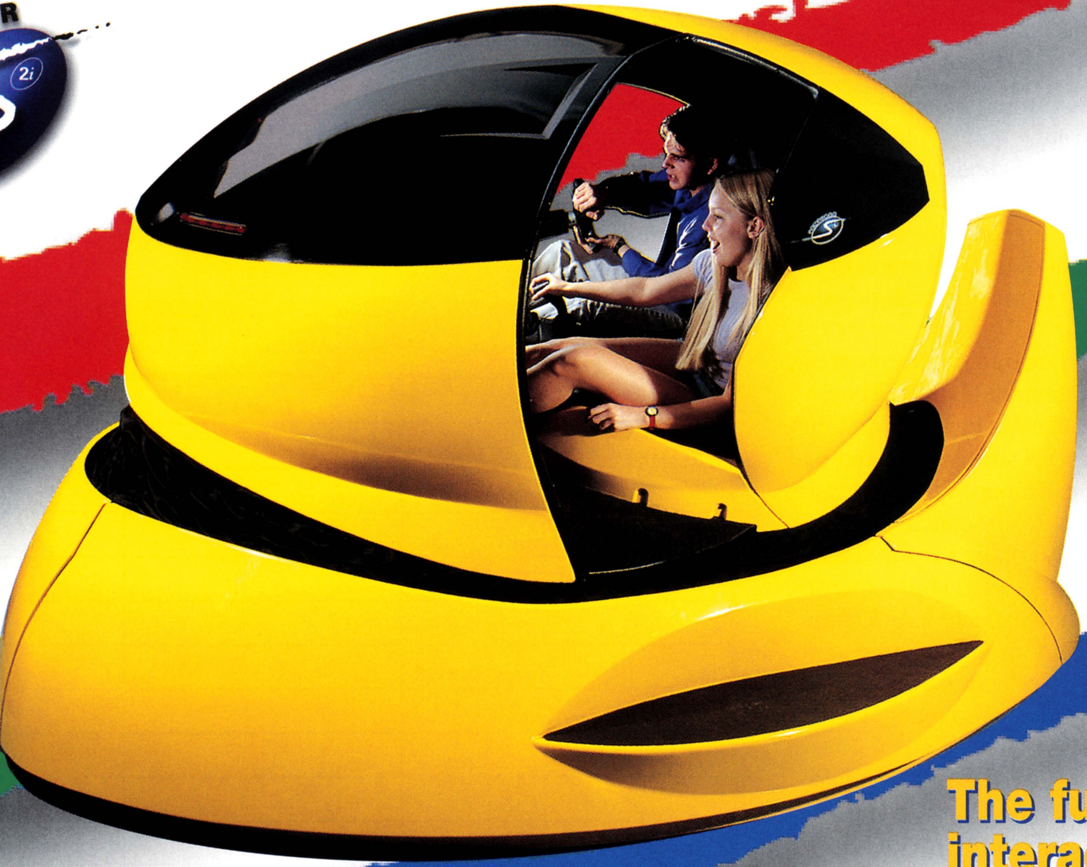

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balance sheet. Your income statement is your operating budget plus projected sales. For an established company, a sales forecast is much easier than a start-up. Start-up companies should consult with a trade association or the SBA for help in making realistic sales projections.

A word of warning: Entrepreneurs are an overconfident bunch. They tend to inflate sales forecasts and minimize expenses. I strongly recommend you do the exact opposite when starting a business from scratch. You're much better off being surprised that your sales, rather then your expenses, are higher than expected. As a start-up, if you're not projecting an operating loss for a while after your business opens, I'd say you were being much too optimistic.

"How long is this 'while' I should expect an operating loss?" you ask. The answer differs by type of business. Check with your accountant or the SBA. As a general rule of thumb, start-ups should be prepared for 12 to 24 months of operating losses. This is why the owner's living expenses must be covered by his or her salary. If you expect to buy groceries with the first month's profits, you'll probably get damn hungry.

Your cash flow projection differs from your income statement in that the first only considers cash expenses while the second only includes tax-deductible expenses. Some expenses are both, while others fall in one category or the other. Salaries are a tax-deductible expense and a cash out-flow for the business. Thus, salary expenses appear on both the Income Statement (Table 2) and the Cash Flow Projection (Table 3). However, not all cash expenses are tax-deductible, and not all tax-deductible expenses represent cash paid out.

Suppose the contractor payments in Table 1 were financed by a bank loan. The loan proceeds would be recorded as "Cash In" on the cash flow analysis and the contractor payments as "Cash Out." However, neither the contractor's payments nor the repayments of the loan principal are recorded on Table 2, the Income Statement.

Instead, the payments to the contractor are capitalized and depreciated, with the depreciation shown on the Income Statement. Depreciation is a non-cash expense and not entered on the cash flow analysis. The interest on the loan is both a cash expense and a tax-deductible expense, appearing on both Tables 2 and 3.

The suggested cash flow analysis in Table 3 differs from Table 2 not only in what expenses are included (operating vs. cash) but also in what time period is covered. The cash flow analysis includes cash expenses incurred before the business is opened. (Some pre-opening expenses-advertising, for example, may be included in the income statement if they are tax-deductible.)

Sometimes called Sources and Uses of Cash, the cash flow analysis might be prepared twice by a company trying to understand its cash needs. The first would be drafted without bank loans or additional equity included; the second would include the addi-

Table 4 **PRO FORMA BALANCE SHEET**

Category	Year 1	Year 2
Current Assets		
Cash		
A/C Receivable		
Notes Receivable		
Inventory		
Other current		
Total Current Assets		
Fixed Assets		
Other Assets		
Total Assets		
Current Liabilities		
A/C Payable		
Loans and notes due within 1 yr.		
Other Current		
Total Current Liabilities		
Long term Liabilities		
Total Liabilities		
Owner's Equity		
Total Liabilities and Owner's Equity		

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tional capital shown to be needed by the first iteration. This evaluation process has the advantage of showing both the timing and amount of additional cash needed. For example, the two-step cash flow analysis may uncover a need for a line of credit rather than a loan, allowing money to be borrowed only when needed and minimizing interest expense.

Your pro forma balance sheet (Table 4) is the final section of your financial plan. Here you summarize your assets, liabilities, and owner's equity. For a start-up, I'd recommend covering at least the first two years of operation. All budgets, income statements, and cash flow projections should cover that time period too.

For an existing company, the time period covered by the balance sheet, budgets, and income statements varies according to need. If writing a strategic plan, five years of projections may be required. Of course, these five-year estimates must be adjusted as time passes and actual results are known.

Once the pro forma balance sheets are created, both large and small companies should compare them to the operating results of other companies in the industry to see how the outcome of the planning process stacks up to industry performance.

One way to do so is to compare your company's pro forma balance sheets to Dun & Bradstreet's Industry Norms and Key Business Ratios. (See "Mayday, mayday, my business is sinking," Play Meter February 1995, for a complete discussion of this approach.)

☛ **Implementation:** Implementing your business plan is a two-step process. The first is the timetable for completing your plan. Break down each part of your plan into its essential steps, then plot out the sequence of those steps on a chart which tells you when each step should be initiated and how long it should take to complete.

Table 5 shows a simplified implementation chart for the site selection and remodeling covered by Table 1. Your implementation chart will cover all the parts of your plan and will be much more complicated than the one shown.

The second aspect of implementation is much less tangible. It involves motivating your employees to achieve the goals set out in your plan in the manner proscribed. To do so, you must reward those employees who work toward the goals you've defined, and not reward those employees who don't. Thus, your employee evaluations and reward system—salaries, bonuses, promotions, and recognition—must be designed around your business plan. Without this integration, your business plan may fail because your employees do not follow it, and all your hard work will be for nought.

Why go through all the trouble of a detailed business plan? Simply put, a well-devised business plan increases your odds of success. Every good coach takes his team into the game with a plan. Does the plan cover everything that might happen? No, but it provides a framework for making adjustments when things go wrong. It also insures that when things do go wrong—and they will, I guarantee it—you have a model against which to assess the unexpected turn of events and the architecture in place to determine the best way to react. ▲

Table 5 IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

(Only Site Location and Remodeling Shown)

Activity	Months (weeks) Before/After Opening											
	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3	4	5
Location Site												
Contractor Selection												
Choose Furniture and Fixtures												
Select Phone System												
Turn on Electricity												
Turn on Water												
Determine insurance needs and purchase policy												

Channing Hayden is a New Orleans businessman, writer, and management instructor at Tulane University.

Avoid the year-end BONUS TRAP

As you prepare for that daunting duty we simply call doing taxes, we've expanded our "Tax Tips" column giving you even more helpful tips that could possibly help you save a bundle.

The typical owner of a closely held business (let's call him Joe) starts the year out thinking something like this: "Will it be a good year?...Bad?...Can't tell yet? Better take a small salary."

The last month of the year comes. Surprise! The year was better than expected. So, Joe takes a fat bonus, eliminating all or most of the profit. Enter the IRS. The year-end bonus trap has been sprung.

It's a fact: Most uninformed business owners play their personal compensation game just like Joe. Dangerous. And it doesn't make any difference if you have done it (really gotten away with it) every year since you've been in business. Get caught, and you are in deep tax trouble. If challenged by the IRS, you're almost certain to lose.

Why? Suppose your total compensation—salary taken during the year plus the year-end bonus—is reasonable. Fine. Assume even the IRS agent agrees it is reasonable. Sorry, but reasonable compensation is not the question. Here's the real question: Is the year-end bonus (1) compensation, or (2) a distribution of profits? The difference in tax cost is worlds apart. Compensation is deductible by your corporation, but a profit distribution is nondeductible. Worse yet, there is a long line of cases where the courts have clobbered closely held corporations like Joe's for playing the bonus game. The courts simply hold the year-end bonus as a nondeductible dividend. The IRS seldom loses! Getting out of this tax trap is expensive—involving additional taxes, interest, legal fees, and often penalties.

How can you avoid this trap? Here are two ways. One: Early in the year, document in the corporate minutes the amount of your compensation and the specific services you will render to deserve it. Set the compensation high rather than low, but take a smaller current salary. For example, take $1,000 a week after setting a $100,000 salary for the year. If things work out, terrific...take the $48,000 balance; if not, then waive all or a portion of the $48,000.

Two: Elect S corporation status. Then a bonus (high or low) arrangement has no meaning. You can simply take some or all of the corporate profits (via a tax-free S corporation dividend) whenever you please, without fear of IRS attack. ☛

TAX TIPS

Play the tax game right:
GET BY GIVING

One basic rule that helps you win the tax game is easy to state and easy to understand: When you pay it, deduct it. Here's a tax strategy that goes even a step further: Get a full deduction for what someone else pays.

First some basics. When you give property to a charity, you are entitled to a deduction equal to the property's fair market value on the date of the gift. Your cost or how you acquired the property is immaterial. The following explains the wonderful tax consequences.

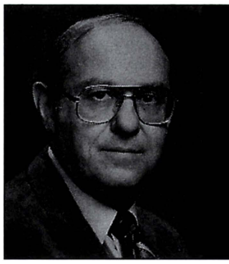
Example: Years ago when you started your company, the stock was worth $1 a share. You owned 100 percent then and still do today. But today it's worth $200 per share. If you sold 100 shares for $20,000 the capital gains tax would be about $5,600. But if you donate the stock to your favorite charity, the capital gains tax is ignored and you get the full $20,000 deductions. In a 40 percent tax bracket that means you would pocket about $8,000.

The following little tax ploy is known as a "charitable bailout." It's one of your answers to the age-old problem of how to get money out of your closely held corporation. It's not so easy to find a buyer for the stock of your family business when you want to sell only a few shares (say $20,000 worth). In fact, you may have trouble trying to give it away because the charity won't be able to sell it either. This is where the bailout comes in. You arrange to have your corporation buy the stock from the charity at its full value. (A professional appraisal is essential.)

Result: You unlock $20,000 from the corporation. Caution: Be careful about the deal you make with the charity. You lose your tax benefits if the charity is obliged to sell the stock to the corporation. It's OK to nix a sale to anyone else, but the charity must at least have the option of keeping the stock. Chances are the charity will want to cash the stock in faster than you want it back, but you won't avoid the capital gains tax if you make the donation contingent upon the charity selling the stock back to your corporation.

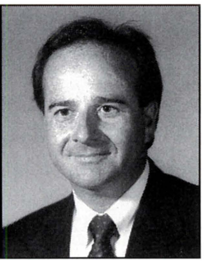
When the smoke clears, your company has, in fact, paid for your $20,000—in reality, a tax-free dividend—charitable deduction. And who still owns 100 percent of your company? You do. A great tax deal all around. One caution: You must use competent professionals to value the shares gifted as well as set up and review the entire transaction. ☛

> *"Be careful about the deal you make with the charity."*



IRVING BLACKMAN

Irving Blackman and Brian Whitlock are CPAs with Blackman, Kallick, Bartelstein LLP in Chicago. Also lawyers, they specialize in business succession and wealth transfer. Both are sought-after speakers. Want to consult? Need a second opinion? Contact them at (312)207-1040; fax (312)207-1066. Their special reports are available at a nominal fee.



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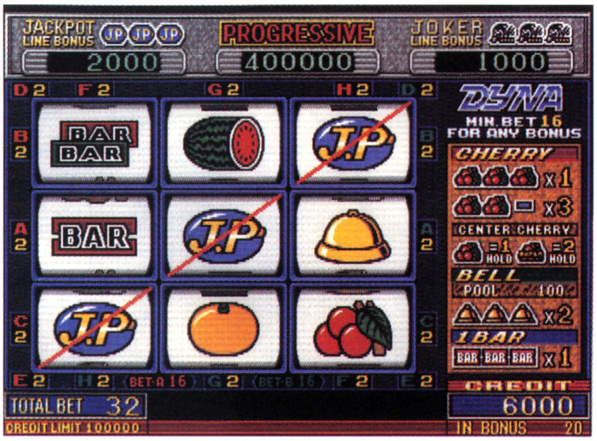
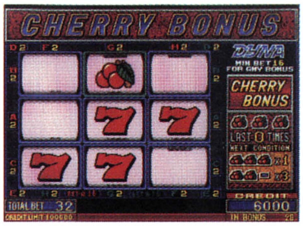
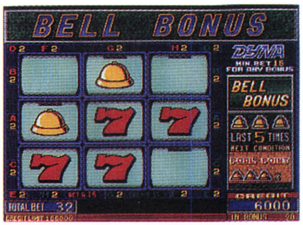

JACKPOT LINE BONUS
PROGRESSIVE
JOKER LINE BONUS
2000
400000
1000
DYNA
MIN BET 16 FOR ANY BONUS
CHERRY
CENTER CHERRY
BELL
POOL 100
1 BAR
CREDIT
TOTAL BET 32
6000
CREDIT LIMIT 100000
IN BONUS 20

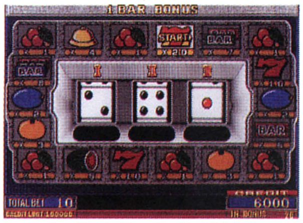
TRIPLE BONUS


CHERRY BONUS
DYNA
CHERRY BONUS
LAST 0 TIMES
CREDIT
6000
TOTAL BET 32

CHERRY BONUS

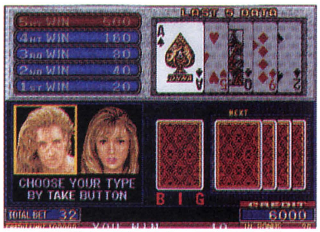

BELL BONUS
DYNA
BELL BONUS
LAST 5 TIMES
CREDIT
6000
TOTAL BET 32

BELL BONUS

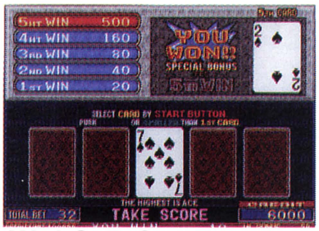

1 BAR BONUS
START
TOTAL BET 10
CREDIT
6000

1 BAR BONUS

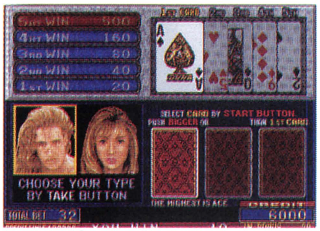
SELECTABLE THREE TYPES OF DOUBLE UP GAME


5th WIN 500
4th WIN 160
3rd WIN 80
2nd WIN 40
1st WIN 20
CHOOSE YOUR TYPE BY TAKE BUTTON
B I G
CREDIT
6000
TOTAL BET 32

NORMAL TYPE


5th WIN 500
4th WIN 160
3rd WIN 80
2nd WIN 40
1st WIN 20
YOU WON!!
SPECIAL BONUS
SELECT CARD BY START BUTTON
TAKE SCORE
CREDIT
6000
TOTAL BET 32

HI-LO 5 CARD TYPE


5th WIN 500
4th WIN 160
3rd WIN 80
2nd WIN 40
1st WIN 20
SELECT CARD BY START BUTTON
CHOOSE YOUR TYPE BY TAKE BUTTON
CREDIT
6000
TOTAL BET 32

HI-LO 3 CARD TYPE

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TAX **TIPS**

IRS victory affects your gift of closely held stock

PAST AND FUTURE

Have you ever made a gift of stock in your closely held business? Thinking of doing so? Then this is must reading. A 1990 Tax Court case (Smith vs. Commissioner, 94 TC 55, 6/13/90) continues to send out ominous shock waves. In a nutshell, this case allows the IRS to revalue your lifetime gifts, even after you die. Your estate can get ripped with more tax on those old gifts. This is a terrible blow to a basic time-honored method of transferring family business: The founder gifts stock to his children.

Here's the story. The decedent (Smith) made taxable gifts of corporate stock in 1982, filed a gift tax return in 1983, and paid the gift tax due in a timely manner. Smith died in 1984. The time for the IRS to assess a gift tax deficiency expired on April 15, 1986. Put another way, the statute of limitations ran out against the IRS and blocked it from getting any additional gift tax on the 1982 stock gift. Sounds like that should be the end of the story.

Unfortunately, for every family owned business in the country it's only the beginning of the story. In 1988, the IRS went after Smith's estate, claiming that the value of the stock gifted in 1982 was $400,000 more on the date of the gift than the amount reported on the gift tax return. Here it is six years later and the IRS wants to not only revalue the gift for estate tax purposes but wants to grab additional tax based on the revaluation. Remember, the IRS was out of luck for gift tax purposes because the statute of limitation had run out against them. No way could the IRS pull off such a caper—right? Wrong! The Tax Court agreed with the IRS, allowing the revaluation.

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What's the impact of the court's decision? It keeps the IRS' revaluation book open on lifetime gifts until after you die. It could be five years or it could be 50 or more, but time will never run out on the IRS. Wow!

What should you do? All gifts of closely held business stock you make from this day forward must be backed up by a professional valuation done by a qualified expert. Retain the valuation report with the related gift tax return. If you didn't file a gift tax return (because the value of the stock was less than $10,000 per donee) keep the valuation report with your will.

What about prior stock gifts—whether or not a gift tax return was filed? Get a proper valuation done now to back up the old gift. Don't back date the valuation. Back dating for a tax advantage could be considered criminal fraud.

This article does not attempt to cover all the aspects of the case, its widespread ramifications, and how much it can hurt you. Don't ignore it. It is urgent that to protect your family, you consult with a qualified professional to determine what the best course of action is for you and your family business. ☛

How much is a good tax idea WORTH?

A picture is worth a thousand words. Of course! How about a tax idea? Worth $100?...$10,000? A million dollars? OK, let's play a game.

I'll give you four tax ideas. You write down how much you can save. Here goes.

Idea #1: The tires on your business vehicles (usually trucks) don't last a year. Say you buy a new truck (hey, them big guys got 18 wheels!). You can deduct the cost of all the tires (and the spare too) in the year of purchase. Depreciate the balance of the new vehicle in the usual way.

Idea #2: Your business is an S corporation and makes $100,000 per year. You're in a 40 percent tax bracket so you paid $40,000 on that $100,000 of income. If you had been a C corporation, the tax would have been only $22,250, a $17,750 saving!

What's that you say? You're 63 years old and getting ready to sell your C corporation that made $400,000. That would have cost the C corporation only $136,000. If you had been an S corporation, the tax bite would have been $140,000—$4,000 more. But wait! When you sell your C corporation you'll pay about $79,000 more on the corporation's $264,000 after-tax profit ($400,000 minus $136,000). A huge tax disaster!

Work out your own numbers. About half of the corporations in the country that should be C corporations are S's and vice versa.

Idea #3: Is a million bucks a lot of money? How much must you earn to leave your family $1 million? Try $3.3 million. Why? Well, you earn $3.3 million (over time). The income tax is $1.3 million. That leaves $2 million. Half of that goes to pay estate taxes when you go to heaven. That leaves a million bucks. Now, if you would create an irrevocable life insurance trust to own a $1 million policy, the entire $1 million would go to your family. Tax free! Simply put, the life insurance premiums—typically for a second-to-die policy—will do the work of $3 million. Since the life insurance premiums are gone (paid to the life insurance company), your estate is reduced by the amount of the premiums. Result? The IRS pays for one-half of your policy. Actually, life insurance—properly structured—is one of the best deals in the tax world.

Idea #4: Suppose your business is worth $2 million (put in your real value). You own it all, but want to give each of your kids about $29,000 worth of stock every year. How much is subject to a gift tax? Under normal circumstances, ZERO. Why? Because you are entitled to two discounts for tax purposes. First, a discount for general lack of marketability (about 35 percent) and second, a discount for minority interest (about 15 percent). That makes the value of each gift ($29,000 worth of stock) about $19,000 for tax purposes. No gift tax if you are married; you can give up to $20,000 gift tax free to each of your kids each year. ☛

> *"Actually, life insurance—properly structured—is one of the best deals in the tax world."*

Sometimes an S CORPORATION is the best way to buy or transfer a business

"The bonuses to Joe would almost certainly have been attacked by the IRS as unreasonable compensation."

A reader of this column (let's call him Joe) asked his CPA to call me to get a second opinion. Here's the story the CPA told me: Joe was about to buy the stock of a C corporation for $1.2 million payable over eight years plus interest at prime, all evidenced by a note. In addition, another $.6 million was to be paid by the C corporation to be divided between a covenant-not-to-compete (for three years starting immediately) and a consulting contract (the CPA was not sure that the seller was really going to consult) to the seller for three years. The idea was to make the $.6 million deductible as paid. Joe intended to get the money to pay the principal and interest on the $1.2 million note by taking a bonus twice a year when the note payments became due.

Fortunately the CPA called before any papers were signed. Without getting into every nook and cranny of the proposed transaction, here is a list of the most obvious tax blunders that would have befallen Joe and his C corporation.

1. The bonuses to Joe would almost certainly have been attacked by the IRS as unreasonable compensation (Joe intended to take $150,000-$175,000 as regular compensation, plus the bonuses).

2. The interest to be paid by Joe is considered investment interest, which is only deductible to offset investment income (Joe had none). In effect, all of that beautiful interest would have been nondeductible.

3. An employee or consultant already has a duty not to compete. Paying the seller for consulting is OK (assuming the amount if reasonable). So if the seller actually worked and got reasonable compensation, it would be deductible. On the other hand, if the seller really did not consult, none of the consulting payments is deductible. In any event, the amount of the covenant is not deductible over the three-year payment and not-to-compete period; instead it can only be written off over 15 years.

Again, without attempting to cover every detail, here is how the transaction will be done:

1. Joe will elect S corporation status. Now Joe can take (tax free) S corporation dividends to pay the note. The interest (because of the S corporation status) is now deductible on Joe's personal tax return as a business expense. The unreasonable compensation problem is eliminated.

2. The interest rate would be raised to two points over prime and reduce the covenant amount dollar for dollar. The consulting contract would run for only the period of time that the seller would actually consult, and he would be paid for same. After the consulting period was over, the covenant-not-to-compete would kick in.

One warning: Whether you're buying or selling a business, pretend you're having a heart transplant and seek out the best professional help you can find. If you are selling your S corporation to one of your kids, he can deduct the interest (see Letter Ruling 9215013). ☛

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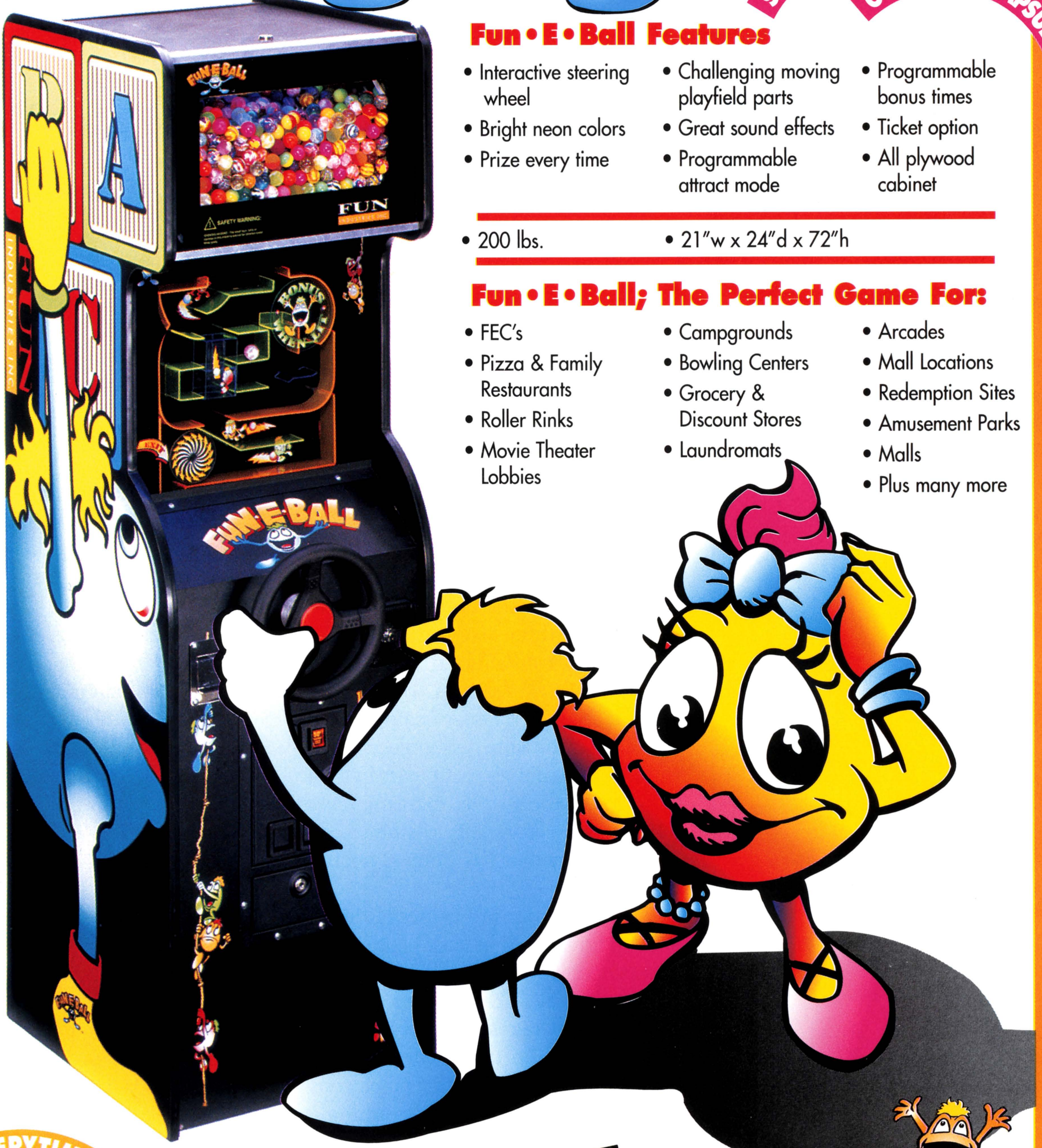

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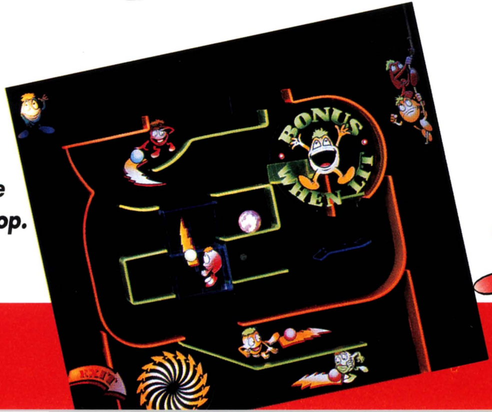

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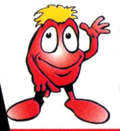

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TWO of the best winning tax strategies

Want to make a grown man cry? Tell him that all those beautiful dollars in his qualified plans (profit-sharing, 401(k), IRA, and the like) are only worth 10 cents to 30 cents after taxes. Sorry, but it's true. The IRS hits you with the three taxes: income (up to 40 percent), estate (up to 55 percent), and excise tax (always 15 percent when it applies). Then, of course, your city, county, or state gets a piece of the action. Professionals, with tears in their eyes, talk about the extreme case where a New York City resident's estate was hit with a 107 percent tax bill. Outrageous!

The first order of business is to get a fix on how much of your plan money is destined to wind up in some tax collector's pocket. A call to your plan advisor is all it takes. Just to get some numbers on the table, suppose you have $1 million in all your plans combined and the estimated tax burden is $800,000. Only $200,000 to you and your family. Ouch!

Can anything be done about it? Yes! But you must be proactive. There are many strategies, but let's take a look at the two most common: The junk money strategy and the subtrust strategy. One point first, both are very complex and need an expert to cover all the details. Yet, the wonderful benefits are easy to understand and attain, like enjoying the ride when you drive a car, but don't know how to build one.

Both strategies use a common denominator: the tax-emaciated dollars (called junk money) buy a life insurance product (usually second-to-die). The eventual proceeds of the life insurance (say $1 million) goes to your family free of the income and estate taxes. Simply put, you have turned $200,000 of after-tax value into $1 million tax free. There's usually plenty of money still in the plan. For example, as I write this article the cost for a second-to-die policy for a husband and wife (both age 65) is only in the $15,000 per year range. You must get your own quote.

The junk money strategy starts by using your plan dollars to buy an annuity. A portion of the annuity is used to fund the life insurance premium. The subtrust is created as part of your qualified plan (actually the current plan is amended or a new plan created). Then your plan trustee gives the necessary premium dollars to the trustee of your subtrust to pay the policy cost.

As far as I know, there is nothing better in the tax law than these two strategies that allow us to snatch a tax victory out of the snarling jaws of a sure tax defeat. ▲

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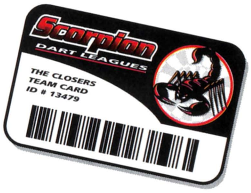
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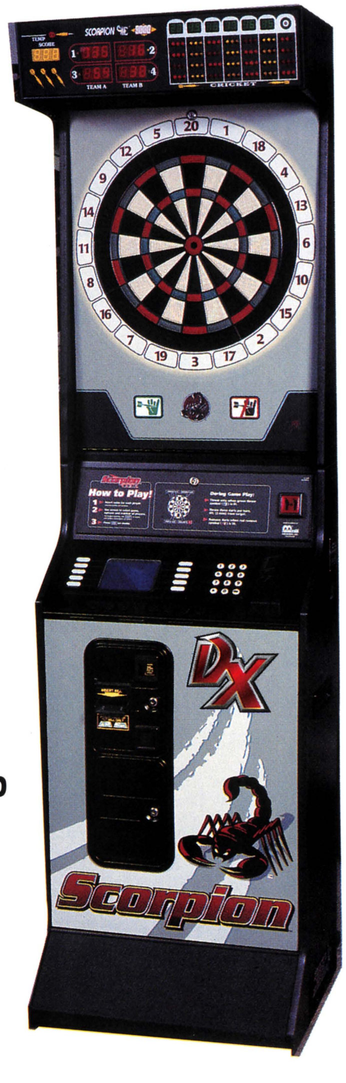
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Do it and save, but know the rules

Income forecasting is the most logical, fair depreciation method for video games, and operators who use the method have done so in good faith. However, it may not be so straightforward, as some CPAs have questioned its validity since new tax laws took effect in mid-1997.

Income forecasting has become the depreciation choice of some coin machine operators across the country. Although a handful of operators had been using this method of depreciation before 1993, it wasn't until then that the IRS issued a private letter ruling to then AMOA president Craig Johnson and his company TATAKA. The ruling, although written for just one company, nonetheless proved an important victory readily used by other operators to justify the depreciation choice. Traditionally, the IRS will give consideration to other companies based on a private letter ruling when those companies are in the same business as the object of the letter.

This private letter ruling was deemed a significant victory by AMOA. The association prepared a lengthy booklet outlining everything from the background to the importance of the private letter ruling. Operators found that they could defer thousands of dollars using this method. The information that follows is from that booklet.

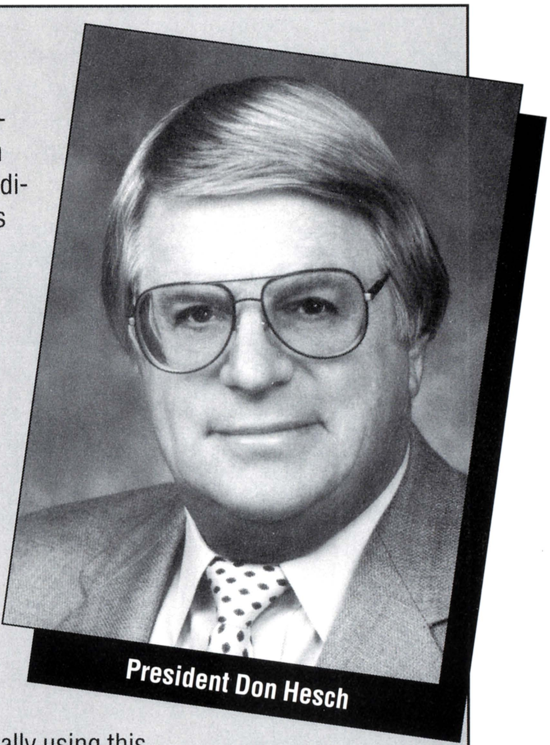
Briefly, income forecasting was designed to depreciate TV films, motion pictures, books, copyrighted musical compositions, sound recordings, and video cassette cartridges. According to the IRS all of these have common attributes: (1) the physical life is largely irrelevant to its income producing potential; (2) each has unique income producing potential; and (3) the useful life of the asset is measured in terms of its income producing ability.

While video games have similar characteristics, some IRS agents disallowed the use of the income forecast method for them since there was no published authority allowing it. That's why the private letter ruling was deemed so vital by operators. Although not officially legal authority, IRS agents were urged to strongly consider the ruling before disallowing the method.

And that has been the case for five years now. In 1997 there was a tax revision blitz bringing with it a cloud of doubt about whether video games could continue to be depreciated using income forecasting. Even operators who had been using the method long before the private letter ruling were asking poignant questions. Several operators were cautioned by their CPAs that video games may be disallowed under the income forecasting method of depreciation. But others contend that with a private letter ruling already paving the way, and video games fitting the description outlined for other entertainment industries, it may be time to make it official by petitioning the IRS to change the statutes and have video games specifically mentioned in the section outlining what is eligible to use income forecasting.

Here is how the section that generated doubt among some CPAs is worded: "...Effective for property placed in service after Aug. 5, 1997, (1) the types of property eligible for income forecast depreciation are restricted to motion picture films, video tapes, sound recordings, copyrights, books, patents, and other property specified in regulations, and (2) consumer durables subject to rent-to-own leases are three-year MACRS property and

AMOA takes necessary action to address potential problem



President Don Hesch

It all began with several phone calls and a few letters from our members, questioning whether the income forecasting depreciation method could still be used on equipment placed after Aug. 5, 1997. An article from a tax newsletter seemed to indicate that it may be questionable according to some of their accountants. Operators wanted to know if that was true or not true.

That's how AMOA got involved. As an association, we felt that it was in the best interest of our members to delve into the matter. There were some reasons—and some stated the opinion—that nothing had really changed. But then there were those members who just weren't sure. So we agreed that we should devote some effort and time to get some sort of confirmation from one of the big accounting firms. My own accountant is very conservative, so that should indicate what he is going to tell me.

After AMOA agreed to investigate the options, we then agreed we would contact someone in the Washington, D.C., area, a top accounting firm, to give us an opinion. We began the search immediately. As you know, Craig Johnson worked with one of the largest accounting firms, Deloitte & Touche, when he petitioned to have a private letter ruling issued by the IRS. We will go that route, too, working with one of the largest reputable accounting firms.

It wasn't until I started looking at the repercussions of whether income forecasting can still be used for video games that I found out how few operators are really using this method. I talked with one software company who said that only about three percent of their clients are using income forecasting. Now that's just one company, but I doubt a great number of operators are using income forecasting without software.

The small number using it amazed me. But I'm fairly certain that those using income forecasting are fairly large operators so the number of video games involved is probably quite large. But it only proved to me that there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of interest in this. But it's understandable if you consider the work involved. This is something that probably wouldn't be viable for someone with only a couple of hundred video games. It is very time consuming. Although my company uses this method, I couldn't really tell you how it works because I have hired people to do it. It would be difficult for someone to do it themselves. And I don't think there's a simple way to do it.

Since we just started the process of investigating this, we already have a number of operators waiting to see what we find out. I haven't talked further to those attending the initial meeting about what they've found out from their own accountants. We have until March to resolve this so we don't want to rush into anything. But we are definitely taking steps to work it out.

Once we obtain the services of a CPA firm we expect them to contact the IRS and find out what its position will be. It's best we do that with one of the major three firms rather than an individual. It's a little premature to be able to be any more definitive. I don't want to say anything that will mislead anyone because it's a little touchy at this point. All I can tell you is that we are following through.

You asked if I had any words of wisdom for other operators, and I can only tell them what I'm going to do: sit tight and wait to see what we find out. I certainly understand that operators currently using income forecasting, or those wanting to use it, will want to be kept informed on all aspects of our progress. We will be posting updated information on our Web site (www.AMOA.com). You also noted that you'll also be posting the most up-to-date information on your own Web site so operators will be able to keep abreast of the latest information (www.playmeter.com). ▲

aren't eligible for the income forecast method."

One operator's accountant sent him a copy of an article from the "Federal Taxes Weekly Alert" that quoted the above statute with a note scribbled in the margin that said: "uncertain as to video games after Aug. 5." And this CPA wasn't the only one to bring this to a client's attention.

"My CPA called and wanted to know if I was aware of the new tax laws pertaining to income forecasting. I wasn't, so he told me that there could possibly be a snag with using income forecasting," another operator noted.

And this comment, "My CPA is so conservative that I wasn't surprised when he called this to my attention. But I'm confident that using this method to depreciate video games is OK. I'll keep doing it until the IRS tells me I can't."

In fact, the interest and speculation over the wording of this article was strong enough to warrant a meeting at AMOA headquarters to discuss the repercussions. Attending the meeting were Don Hesch, Frank Seninsky, Dan Sunday, Jim Hayes, Jim Stansfield, and Jerry Derrick. Johnson, who was unable to attend the meeting, at first felt that nothing had really changed, but after discussions with fellow AMOA members he agreed that action may be called for from AMOA.

AMOA has been quick to act on this issue, noting that it could have costly repercussions for operators should income forecasting be denied. However, executive director Jim Weir was adamant that no one would be convicted over the issue. "This isn't a legal issue where operators will be convicted. But it's an issue that AMOA will be addressing," explained Weir. He added that as an as-

Private Letter Ruling issued by the Internal Revenue Service

Index Number 168.23-00

This is the response to Deloitte & Touche in Salt Lake City, Utah, on their request for a private letter ruling on behalf of their client, Craig Johnson of Tataka.

This is in reply to a ruling request submitted Sept. 10, 1992, on behalf of X concerning the depreciation of X's video game machines (video games). Specifically, X requests a ruling that the income forecast method may be used to depreciate X's video games.

X has been engaged in the video game business since 1988. X owns hundreds of video games and has placed them at various locations. These locations are not owned by X. X is obligated to pay the owner/operator of the locations a percentage of the gross proceeds generated by the video games.

The information submitted with the ruling request indicated that not all video games are profitable. A game's success is dependent upon its popularity with the public. Unsuccessful games may produce little or no income after their initial exposure to the public. Other games generate income at a rate that declines over a period of from one to two years. Popular games will continue to generate income from additional playing. Thus, the various video games generate uneven income flows. The usefulness of a game in X's business is a function of the income it produces, rather than a function of the age of the game.

X has depreciated its video games under the Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MACRS) set forth in section 168 of the Internal Revenue Code. X has submitted information with its ruling request representing that the income forecast method has been used by the video game industry since the inception of the industry in the mid-1970s.

Section 167(a) of the Code provides a depreciation deduction for the exhaustion, wear and tear, and obsolescence of property used in the trade or business or held for the production of income.

Section 168(a) of the Code provides that, except as otherwise provided in this section, the depreciation deduction provided by section 167(a) for any tangible property shall be determined by using the applicable depreciation method, recovery period, and convention.

Section 168(f)(l) of the Code provides that section 168 shall not apply to any property if the taxpayer elects to exclude the property from the application of the section and, for the first taxable year for which a depreciation deduction would be allowable with respect to the property in the hands of the taxpayer, the property is properly depreciated under a method of depreciation not expressed in a term of years. ☛

sociation AMOA felt it would be in the best interests of its members to take action.

AMOA has already made plans to contact one of the three top CPA firms in the country to work with them to petition the IRS to officially recognize video games in its regulations concerning income forecasting. A word of advice to operators who could be affected: check with your own CPA.

Background

Prior to 1981, video games were depreciated over a period of 24 months or less. Then, for video games purchased between 1981 and 1986, Congress increased the depreciable life to five years. But it was obvious to all who operated video games that rarely did one generate income for that long. In fact, a video game generally only has a viable lifespan of one or two years. Operators needed a depreciation method where their video games could be depreciated over the length of time they were expected to generate income. After all, video games weren't like office furniture that had an extended lifespan where depreciating over five years would make sense. Income forecasting was the answer.

Short lifespan was the most obvious reason to employ the income forecasting method of depreciation for video games. Because video games fell within the description of the attributes outlined above, income forecasting that measures an asset's usefulness by comparing income flow with estimated income is reasonable. As opposed to airplanes or railroad cars (both mentioned in the private letter ruling), whose usefulness is adequately measured by the passage of time, consequently there is no justification for using income

Rev. Rul. 60-358, 1960-2 C.B. 68, recognizes the inadequacy of the time-based methods of depreciation formerly described in section 167(b) of the Code when applied to television films because these methods result in a distortion of income. The revenue ruling states that the distortion is caused by the uneven flow of income generated by television films. The ruling permits use of the income forecast method because the usefulness of a television film in a taxpayer's business is more accurately measured over the stream of income it produces than over the passage of time alone. The ruling states that the income forecast method is limited in its application to television films, taped shows for reproduction, and other property of a similar character.

Rev. Rul. 64-273, 1964-2 C.B. 62, amplified Rev. Rul. 60-3568 by permitting use of the income forecast method for motion picture films. Rev. Rul. 79-285, 1979-2 C.B. 91, extended use of the income forecast method to book manuscripts, patents, and master recordings. Rev. Rul. 89-62, 1989-1 C.B. 78, holds that rental video cassettes may be depreciated under the income forecast method. The ruling provides that taxpayers may group their video cassettes by title for purposes of making the income projections required under the income forecast method.

The assets discussed in Rev. Rul. 60-358, Rev. Rul. 64-273, Rev. Rul. 79-285, and Rev. Rul. 89-62, for which use of the income forecast method has been approved, have the following attributes in common: (1) the physical life of the asset is largely irrelevant to its income producing ability; (2) each asset has unique income producing ability; and (3) the useful life of the asset is measured in terms of its income producing ability. Because of these attributes, a method of depreciation that measures an asset's usefulness by comparing income flow with estimated income is a reasonable method.

In Carland Inc. vs. Commissioner, 90 T.C. 505 (1988), aff'd on other grounds, 909 F.2d 1101 (8th Cir. 1990), the taxpayer attempted to use the income forecast method to depreciate railroad cars, automotive equipment, and airplanes. The court concluded that the usefulness of these types of assets is adequately measured by the passage of time and that there is no justification for using the income forecast method in the context of these assets.

In the present situation X's video games share the same uneven flow of income characteristics as the assets described in the revenue rulings previously discussed. The income producing ability of the games does not depend on physical wear and tear or the mere passage of time. Thus, the games are distinguishable from the types of assets described in Carland, the usefulness of which is adequately measured by time-based depreciation methods. The game will produce revenue only for as long as they are popular with the playing public. Each game has a different income-generating potential based upon its popularity. Further, the games are useful in X's business only so long as they generate income. Because of the uneven flow of income produced by the games, their usefulness in X's business cannot be adequately measured by the passage of time alone. Income distortion would be avoided if the games' depreciation followed their income flow. Therefore, the video games may properly be depreciated under the income forecast method.

Accordingly, based upon the facts and representations set forth above, the income forecast method of computing depreciation is an acceptable method for X to depreciate video games on a title by title basis. Under section 168(f)(I) of the Code, X must elect to exclude the games from MACRS the year they are placed in service by X.

This ruling is directed only to the taxpayer who requested it. Section 6110(j)(3) of the Code provides that it may not be used or cited as precedent. ▲

forecasting for this type of equipment. Reversely, video game values are not measured by the passage of time or the wear and tear on the game. Their useful life is measured in terms of its income-producing ability. In other words, a plane will be useful until it literally wears out, while a video game will stop generating income long before it physically deteriorates.

Under the other depreciation method, Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System, an asset would be assigned a class life of three, five, seven or 10 years. That asset is then depreciated over that time period. In the volatile video game industry, even a five-year life grossly overstates the actual operating period of most video games. In fact, video games generally lose their public appeal after the first, possibly the second year.

Using income forecasting, a video game would be depreciated 53.37 percent the first year; under MACRS (five years) it would be depreciated 20 percent the first year. A $3,000 video game depreciated 50 percent the first year would result in a tax deferral of $252 compared to using MACRS (five years).

Congress allowed other entertainment industries to avoid MACRS' useful life classifications and use income forecasting because it recognized that certain assets generate uneven flows of income and have unique income-producing potential. Probably the most notable is the movie industry. Video games are similar in income-producing potential and fall within the same classification, that is, income potential is wholly dependent on public appeal.

The formula for calculating depreciation using income forecasting shows the annual depreciation deduction being equal to the cost of the video game (less the salvage value), multiplied by a fraction, the numerator being the current year's net income from the game, and the denominator the total forecasted net income. Here's how it looks:

$$\textbf{Depreciation} = \textbf{(cost - salvage value)} \times \frac{\textbf{current net income}}{\textbf{total forecasted net income}}$$

OK, let's take that formula and put some numbers to it. A video game is purchased for $6,000, its estimated net revenue is $8,000 over its useful life, and the salvage value is $500. That $8,000 projected income is broken down over three years: $3,500 the first year, $3,000 the second year, and $1,500 the third. Using these figures, here's how the depreciation formula would look:

$$\textbf{1st year: \$2,406} = \textbf{(\$6,000/purchase - \$500/salvage)} \times \frac{\textbf{\$3,500/first-year income}}{\textbf{\$8,000/projected lifetime income}}$$

$$\textbf{2nd year: \$2,063} = \textbf{(\$6,000 - \$500)} \times \frac{\textbf{\$3,000}}{\textbf{\$8,000}}$$

$$\textbf{3rd year: \$1,031} = \textbf{(\$6,000 - \$500)} \times \frac{\textbf{\$1,500}}{\textbf{\$8,000}}$$

There is no concrete formula for determining the salvage value of a video game. It is, however, dependent on the operator's policy for disposing of his video games. If he routinely sells them while they still have public appeal, the salvage value would be higher than for an operator who disposes of them after they become obsolete.

The most difficult aspect of using income forecasting is estimating each game's projected earnings. It should be based on conditions known to exist at the end of the operator's tax year. The courts have ruled that failing to keep adequate records on a title by title basis and reasonably forecasting the game's total income could result in disallowing the use of income forecasting. For some this rule could mean changing the method used for coin collection since each game's income must be tracked and recorded. Because the income must be forecasted, video games of different titles can't be lumped together and depreciated using a single projected income figure for the whole group. However, video games of the same title may be added together for depreciation purposes.

Choosing income forecasting is not to be taken lightly. It's a lot of work with precise rules. For more detailed information on this depreciation method, you can contact AMOA at (www.AMOA.com) and request a copy of the booklet it has prepared. ▲

> ***"Several operators were cautioned by their CPAs that video games may be disallowed under the income forecasting method of depreciation."***

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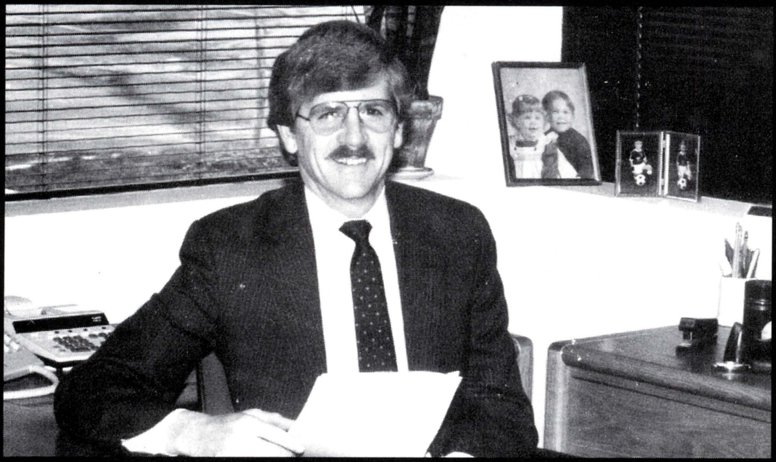
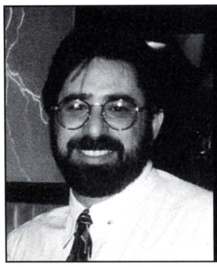


This photo is from April 1984 when Tom McAuliffe was our Coinman of the Month.

Ken Anderson was with Game Plan in the early '80s when the company introduced *Kaos*.

This photo was marked "Steve Blattspieler" but we had to look twice to make sure. He was with Tournament Soccer so it had to be a reeeaally long time ago!

Talk about a long time ago! Here's Tom Petit apparently when he was with Atari (note the shirt!). It had to be at least 15 years ago!



Michael Getlan is a third generation owner/operator of arcades and family entertainment centers and a member of IAAPA's Education, Technology, and Award Committees. He is director of operations for Amusement Consultants Ltd. of New Rochelle, N.Y., which operates 40 locations in 12 U.S. states and Central America, and is a frequent speaker at industry conventions.

The intangible keys to SUCCESS

In any arcade operation, change and innovation are the driving forces behind attracting repeat local business to your facility. Such innovation is often found in the rotation of equipment or merchandise. Other times it may take the form of contests, tournaments, or special offers directed at your clientele. Whatever the innovations or changes, establishing their direction and magnitude is the most critical, and usually the most difficult, step.

The intangibles of business are those things that are difficult to quantify. The quality of service, courtesy, and attentiveness—these intangibles are the hallmarks by which guest service is judged. While not as easily discerned by the guests, decisiveness in operation is another intangible key to a successful business.

Don't just do something; stand there

The greatest luxury a manager or owner can have is sufficient time to carefully consider actions and strategies. The first and most important step before taking any action is to clarify your end result. Clarity of purpose is critical in determining the initial steps in any effort. As the saying goes, "If you don't know your destination, any direction will do."

Take the time to evaluate the situation. Determine the best possible outcome, acceptable compromise, and then take the necessary steps.

A common challenge is testing out and purchasing equipment. Arcade managers are inundated with a barrage of new equipment that may or may not excite clientele enough to ensure a repeat visit.

What needs to be done if a new game is not performing at expected levels? Evaluate the situation. Perhaps a minor adjustment or some mechanical attention is all that is required. Physically moving the game is often very effective in drawing attention to it. Perhaps it needs to be decorated differently or promoted more aggressively. There are as many possible remedies as there are games and facilities.

Don't just stand there...

Then again, sometimes the only thing to be done is to sell the machine and make room for another one. The goal is to have each machine meeting or exceeding its financial goal.

If a machine cannot meet goals it is costing money. Experience and judgment will dictate when this is necessary. At this point, decisive action is key.

Selling a machine is time-sensitive. If the machine isn't performing at your facility despite your best efforts, it's probably not fairing much better at your competitor's location. They also will be looking to sell their machine and supply will exceed demand in short order.

Decisiveness means making clear decisions and carrying them through to their completion. While flexibility is important, the most common problem of management is lack of action. Many times, an initial evaluation so paralyzes those in charge that critical timing needed to effect a correct solution is missed. As mentioned earlier, time is a luxury—don't count on it.

A decision to wait and see often becomes a decision to do nothing. While snap judgments can have unexpected results, they often create useful momentum. Experience allows a manager to constantly assess situations and change course when necessary.

An example of the need for swift action is correcting staff behavior. If a staff member engages in behavior that is disruptive to the operation, the priority should be to halt the disruption. This type of attitude adjustment can be a difficult and uncomfortable task. There is often the temptation to ignore the behavior and avoid uncomfortable feelings.

Resolving the situation may involve a verbal discussion or warning in private. Posting a general notice to the staff of the manager's concerns regarding the behavior may enlist the staff in a self-policing action without pointing at the specific and staff member. Sometimes an appropriate cartoon can draw a staff's attention to a problem in a lighthearted way.

Reaction time is similarly very important in handling security problems, whether involving cash or merchandise. The trail gets cold quickly.

Move rapidly, ask lots of questions, and listen objectively. Be polite, but leave no stone unturned. The perception that dishonesty will be tolerated creates a greater financial risk than any single dishonest employee.

Remember that in all likelihood a manager is interviewing a majority of honest employees and a single culprit. Everyone should understand why an investigation is being held, and that the stated goal is to straighten out the problems and get back to business as soon as possible.

Lead by example

Lead your staff members by setting the example. Clarify goals and implement plans. Leap into action when necessary. Use this strategy for long- and short-term goals by department and by team. Be flexible, change course when necessary, and seek input from everyone around you. Above all, develop a propensity for action! ▲

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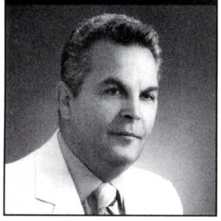
GENE URSO



What is NANI?

NANI, the National Amusement Network Inc., is a joint venture formed by the Amusement and Music Operators Association and TVPhone of Canada.

Why NANI?

To protect the interest of AMOA member operators in the coming era of downloading, networked video games.

What does NANI do?

1.) NANI runs a central computer network headquarters to link, support, and promote modem equipped games (videos and others).

2.) NANI recommends a standard set of specifications for hardware and software manufacturers. This will allow operators to buy and use all participating products on the network in an interchangeable and cost effective manner.

What types of things can NANI provide?

Tournament games, Instant win game redemption, Video advertising, Coupon advertising, Game statistic tracking, Cash control, Software downloading, Service diagnostics

Can all NANI games provide all of the functions?

No. Each NANI game will provide the functions included by individual manufacturers as part of their products.

How can operators access all of the NANI functions?

All NANI functions will be provided in the Public PC. The Public PC, which has been developed and tested, is now in the stage of obtaining game software from various software developers or software publishers. Once those publishers finish their development of Public PC software, operators will be able to obtain all NANI functionality.

Editor's note: We would like to thank Gene for taking the time to pen a concise description of the much-discussed NANI project and hope he or other representatives of NANI will avail themselves of this forum to answer such questions of when and from whom specific software titles will be available for the network and how operators will go about becoming a part of NANI. Less than 40 percent of the operators participating in Play Meter's 1997 State of the Industry Survey, published in the January issue, expressed confidence in the NANI project, while another 40 percent said they were not aware of the initiative. In 1996, 41 percent of operators were unfamiliar with NANI. ▲

Gene Urso of Madison Coin Machine currently serves as president of NANI. He served as president of AMOA in 1992 and recently completed his term on the association's Past President's Council.

GAME
TOKENS
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HERE
40

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With PC and Trak Vend operation, the Standard Remote Control is replaced by the PC Computer and the Trak Vend Interface. Up to three Token Tech #2000 Dispensers can be used with each Trak Vend System.

Interface Control For Token Dispensing With PC

Trak Vend is a sophisticated (but simple) system to control Token Dispensers using any IBM-compatible Personal Computer.

Each Interface Trak Vend can operate up to three Token Dispensers (such as Arcade Tokens, Batting Cage Tokens, Ride Tokens, etc.).

Up to 40 different Product Sales Features can be programmed for "combination" sales.

The software program, which is supplied with each Trak Vend, has numerous security controls, and continuous monitoring and memory features. The program is set up to print-out three different reports:

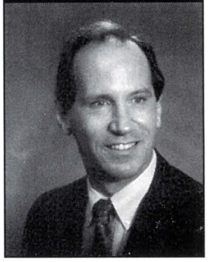
1. Daily Activity Report.
2. Product Summary Report.
3. Daily Security Report.

The Trak Vend is designed to be readily adaptable for most Token Dispensers now in use. New Dispensers are not required. It has been tested with new PCs and with used PCs dating back to 1983. New PCs are not required.

For additional information, contact Virgil Vance, Van Brook of Lexington, Phone 1-800-553-3134 or (606) 231-7100, or Fax (606) 231-7108.

LEGAL
EAGLE

THOMAS F. FRICKE



All it takes is a LITTLE SKILL

This is what you can operate lawfully in Arkansas:

"...any machine...which provides amusement."

Nothing is in the base definition about skill. There are some strings attached, but basically an Arkansas "amusement device" may be licensed by the state and operated lawfully, even though it is a game of pure chance. (The major restriction is a familiar one: awards must be merchandise of limited value. The per-game limit is $5 or if less, 10 times the single-game charge. There is a build-up limit of $50 wholesale.)

Arkansas and Missouri share a long state line. You would expect that any Missouri-based operator with locations on both sides of it would gain an immediate appreciation of the meaning of the Arkansas law. In Missouri a game of chance isn't an amusement device–it's prohibited. Not that Missouri's law is that bad. It prohibits only games:

"...in which the outcome depends in a material degree upon an element of chance, notwithstanding that the skill of the contestants may also be a factor..."

I've seen worse. And for the most part, Missouri law enforcement's application has not been unreasonable. Legislative reform can be costly. Normally, the amusement operating community only pursues legislative reform when it is under pressure by law enforcement applying an outdated law in an unreasonable way. This has not been the case in Missouri, for the most part. I was not the only person who was surprised, then, when a Missouri senator introduced an amusement device exception bill during the 1997 regular session. It would have exempted from the prohibition which I quoted:

"...an amusement device that confers only an immediate right of replay or a coupon or credit that can be redeemed on the premises for something of value, except for intoxicating liquor...or tobacco products, that does not exceed $25."

Wow! No skill required and a single game limit of $25. Now, that's amusement! Imagine our even greater surprise when the Senate passed this bill. It bogged down in the House where the opposition discovered it and it didn't pass in last year's session. The Missouri legislature is now in regular session again, from Jan. 7 until about May 15. As of this writing, the same sponsor and constituency are poised to try again, with operative language somewhat like this:

"The term gambling device will not include an amusement or redemption machine that dispenses coupons, prizes, or games. An amusement or redemption machine will not be identical in purpose to casino games with the purpose of casino games being cash payout. Coupons, games, and prizes may be redeemed on the premises for something of value. No intoxicating liquor, beer, tobacco products, or money may be redeemed for any consideration."

They say that "chutzpah" means: "When a child murders both of his parents and then pleads for mercy because he is an orphan, that's chutzpah." And I say that when you ask the legislature for "amusement reform" with no requirement for skill and no prize value limitation that, too, is chutzpah.

It is also folly if your state is Missouri. Missouri, like most other states, has something in its constitution about lotteries:

"...the general assembly shall not have power...to authorize lotteries or gift enterprises for any purpose, and shall enact laws to prohibit the sale of lottery or gift enterprise tickets, or tickets in any scheme in the nature of a lottery..."

In other words, the legislature can't pass a law to allow "lotteries." To allow them, you have to go to the people to amend the state constitution. This has been done a few times for the state lottery, for charitable bingo, and most recently, for riverboat casinos. Don't be fooled by the term "lottery." Missouri, like most other states, applies the term expansively to apply to coin-operated games of chance and to all other pursuits including consideration, chance, and prize, and not that include any skill.

Normally, liberalization in favor of true amusement redemption can be expected to be uncontroversial, at least when initially proposed to the legislature. But legislative proposals to expand "gaming" are always controversial. In states in which there has been an expansion of licensed casino operations, you expect to encounter key legislators determined that lawful gambling be allowed to expand no further. With its riverboat casinos, Missouri is one of these states. And, as happens in many other states, when the opponents of the expansion of licensed gaming are in the minority, they sue. In the gambling context, this has happened so frequently in Missouri and with such profound effects that one wag has suggested that Missouri be renamed from the "Show Me" state to the "Sue Me" state.

For example, in 1992 the people approved riverboat gaming by referendum. Six months after their vote, the general assembly enacted a law to provide for regulation of the then-proposed riverboat casinos. On the day after the enactment, a taxpayer sued the Missouri Gaming Commission. He complained that the law which would have allowed riverboats to have slot machines was void. He argued that they were "lotteries" as that term is used in the Missouri Constitution. He argued that the constitution prohibited the passage of laws that allow "lotteries."

The Supreme Court of Missouri agreed with this argument. In doing so, the Supreme Court stated that the Missouri Constitution prohibited all games in which no skill is involved. In its opinion, the Supreme Court referred to an earlier precedent involving horse betting. In that precedent, handed down in 1986, the Court had concluded that horse betting is not a constitutionally-prohibited "lottery" because at least some skill is involved in picking the horse you bet on. In the 1992 decision, several specific games were before the Court for decision. The Supreme Court interpreted the constitutional prohibition to mean that games like blackjack were not prohibited "lotteries" because they involved a little skill. On the other hand, the Court found slot machines to be prohibited "lotteries" because their use involved no skill whatsoever. So until the people could put an end to this absurdity by another constitutional change (just for casinos) we had an embarrassing situation here in Missouri. Gaming boats were cruising up and down the river without slot machines and losing money on each cruise.

This state of the law is far from unique to Missouri. It should be examined by anyone attempting to reform the law to protect amusement redemption. In the usual case, expect to find a problem with the constitution's lottery or gambling restrictions. And in states where the opponents of gaming have mobilized, don't be surprised if they sue to have an improper law declared void. As might be indicated by the 1992 case I mentioned above, they seem to do so often, especially in Missouri.

The proponents of the 1997 Missouri Redemption Bill encountered concerned opposition in the House. Nobody there was more concerned than Rep. W. Todd Akin. Rep. Akin insisted that the bill would open the state to slot machines. He played a significant role in keeping the bill in his committee long enough so that it could not be reached for a vote by the end of the session. In any further attempts at Missouri redemption reform, this legislator can be expected to examine the proposal carefully and with suspicion. And if he is unsatisfied that the proposed bill will protect "amusement" but not expand "gaming," then take no comfort if the bill is nevertheless enacted into law. There just might be a lawsuit to declare the law invalid. I say this because there are two operating Missouri casinos that may not (or may) obtain renewal of their licenses. They're not on the riverbank. They float in artificial spaces filled with water from the Missouri River. The Missouri Constitution permits gaming facilities only "upon the Mississippi River and the Missouri River." A little more than a month ago, the Supreme Court of Missouri decided that an artificial basin is not "upon." The plaintiff in the case was Rep. W. Todd Akin, a "taxpayer."

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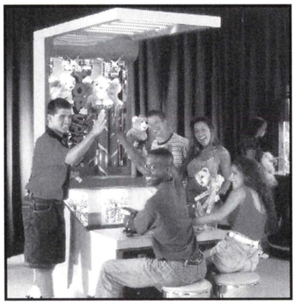

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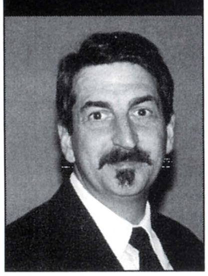
I conclude from this that in Missouri and probably in other states as well, a redemption proposal that does not include the requirement of a least a little skill is a long shot at best and is vulnerable to being voided by the courts, even if passed. I started by pointing out that the Missouri proponents probably got the idea from their experience across the state line in Arkansas. As far as I know, nobody has challenged the constitutionality of the Arkansas redemption law. However, the questionable constitutionality of that law hasn't gone entirely unnoticed. In a formal opinion published in 1995, the attorney general of Arkansas considered which "amusement devices" are permitted and which are prohibited under the law that I summarized at the beginning of this article. The attorney general concluded that the only illegality under the statue occurred when cash awards were made or when merchandise awards, having a value in excess of the statutory limit, were made.

"...to the extent Act 740 authorizes players to pay consideration to play a device controlled entirely by chance...and to receive a prize therefore (even though the prize is not money), it may be constitutionally suspect under Arkansas Constitution Article 19, Section 14 which states that no lottery shall be authorized by this state nor shall the sale of lottery tickets be allowed." ▲

Tom Fricke is a St. Louis-based attorney who specializes in legal issues relating to the amusement game business. He serves as chairman of the IAFEC government relations committee and can be reached at (314)361-6672 or fax (314)361-0872.

TECHNICAL
TOPICS

RANDY FROMM



Introducing Sencore's HA2500 Horizontal Analyzer

A Play Meter Monthly Exclusive

How many times has this happened to you? You're working on a monitor with a straightforward problem: the fuse has blown, and you have a shorted horizontal output transistor.

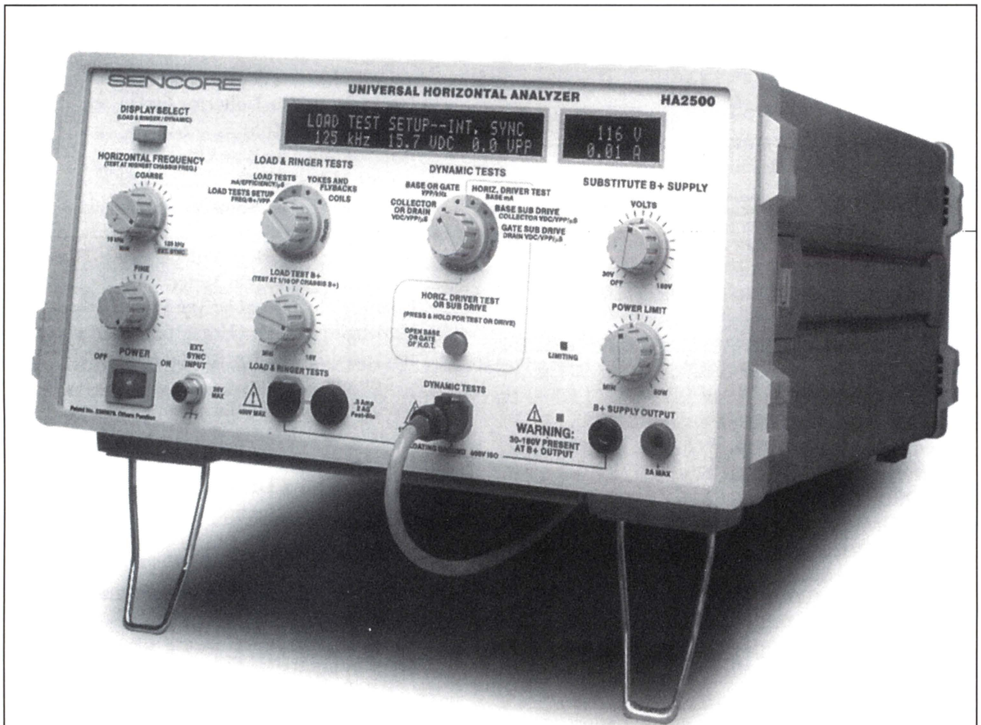
You say to yourself, "Easy fix...I'll slap in a new horizontal output transistor, replace the fuse, and be outta here in 15 minutes."

But when you fire up the monitor after replacing the bad components, the new parts blow out before you have a chance to see what the heck is going on.

As we saw in last month's *Play Meter,* sometimes the switched-mode power supply's primary can fail, causing the B+ voltage to become too high. Of course, this should normally trip the x-ray protection circuit but you never know what kind of damage might be caused by a power supply gone haywire.

Wouldn't it be nice to have a substitute B+ power supply that could be used to power the monitor's deflection circuits independently of the monitor's own B+ supply? Wouldn't it be even better if the power supply's output voltage was adjustable? Ideally, this adjustable power supply would be current-limited as well. That way, you would prevent further burnouts.

Of course, in the past (and when working on older monitors) you could use a variac to accomplish much the same task, turning up the AC voltage slowly while feeling (and smelling) for overheated components. But as Play Meter readers know, you cannot use a variac when troubleshooting monitors with switching regulator power supplies. The power supply simply waits until the AC input voltage is sufficient, then fires-up at the full B+ output.



HA2500

With this all-too-common problem in mind, Sencore has developed another piece of test equipment that is specifically designed for monitor repair. Dubbed the HA2500, it's a Universal Horizontal Analyzer that contains a number of different tools and tests (including a substitute B+ power supply) allowing you to pinpoint these tricky, high-current, "smoke 'em up" kind of problems. We'll start with an introduction to the features of the HA2500 and continue with a more detailed look at the substitute power supply. We'll examine the other tests and measurements in future issues of *Play Meter.*

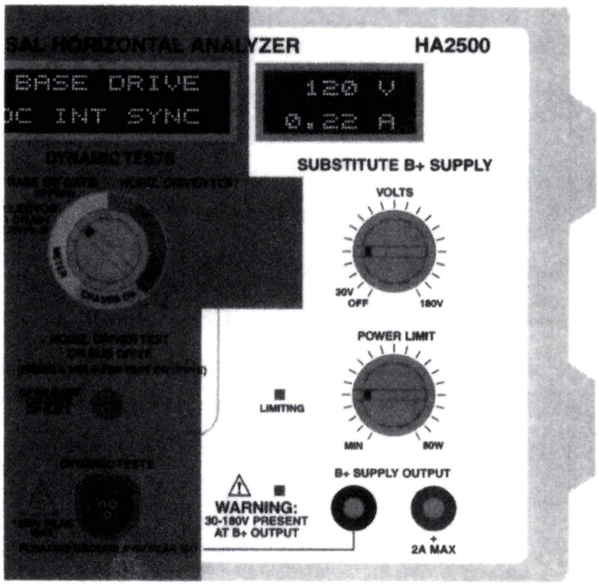
In a nutshell, the HA2500 provides analyzing tests and substitution capabilities to localize horizontal circuit defects. This generally works out much faster and cheaper than using conventional methods such as unsoldering components, firing the monitor up, and seeing what smokes. Its tests isolate defects that often require many hours of expensive troubleshooting and/or component swapping.

If you really want to get sophisticated, the HA2500 can be synchronized to a video or RGB signal generator to become an integrated part of the service bench, or it can be used for field servicing. As most *Play Meter* readers know, I am a proponent of field repair. I believe it is possible to fix most problems (including monitor failures) in the field. All you generally lack is replacement components and a little peace and quiet.

FEATURES OF THE HA2500

The substitute B+ supply can be used to test the horizontal output stage to full potential when the chassis power supply is dead or suspected bad. This is a 100 percent way to absolutely deter-

Fig. 1: The variable SUBSTITUTE B+ SUPPLY outputs 30 to 180 volts for substitution of the chassis B+ power supply to test horizontal stages and HV/deflection regulators.



mine that the power supply itself is at fault AND that the rest of the monitor (the video, sync, deflection, high voltage, and CRT) are all working properly.

Also, the substitute power supply enables you to increase the voltage slowly in order to detect high voltage breakdown failures and to troubleshoot shutdown, regulation, or other problem symptoms. These are the weird problems that fry stuff before you realize what's going on.

Another tool of the HA2500 is a "power-off" test of the horizontal output stage (the flyback transformer, horizontal deflection coil in the yoke, and the flyback derived power supplies) to determine it's free of severe defects or if problems exist. This is a really clever test because it stimulates the operation of the horizontal output stage at 1/10 its normal level and analyzes the resulting currents and voltages.

The Load Test is valuable in determining if repairs are feasible without first repairing the power supply. It protects against damaging replacement parts by finding severe problems before power is applied. Of course, if everything in the horizontal output stage is OK, the HA2500 will tell you that as well. This means, of course, that you are free to fire-up the monitor at full power without worrying about letting the smoke out of the components.

One of Sencore's most useful contributions to the world of troubleshooting is its "ringer test." The ringer test is THE way to test the yoke coils and transformers found in horizontal output stages. Several of the pieces of test equipment manufactured by Sencore incorporate the ringer test, including the HA2500.

Coils and transformers often fail from one or more internal wire turns shorting together. A shorted turn lowers the "Q" of the inductor (a measurement of the "quality" of the coil that is not related directly to its inductance). At the same time, it lowers the efficiency of the circuit. This type of failure is difficult to confirm because it causes little change in the inductance or resistance of the coil. The ringer test easily identifies bad coils or transformers with shorted turns by sending out a pulse to the coil under test and measuring the return echoes. It's like ringing a bell with a single blow of a hammer and listening to the bell as it resonates. The higher the quality of the bell, the longer it will sound. If the ringer test doesn't count at least 10 return pulses, the coil is bad. This is a test that cannot be performed with any other type of test equipment.

The HA2500 also has some dynamic tests that analyze the input and output voltage parameters of the horizontal output stage. Of course, the term dynamic means power-on (as opposed to static testing which is done power-off). Autoranged measurements are displayed on the fluorescent panel and indicate if the horizontal input drive or B+ voltages are correct.

The horizontal driver test is really cool. It simulates a low impedance base/emitter horizontal output transistor junction and measures the output drive current capability of a horizontal driver stage. The test identifies horizontal driver stages with weak or reduced drive current output or intermittent drive current output, causing the horizontal output transistor to fail.

This tests for a REALLY sneaky type of failure where a weak or intermittent drive causes the horizontal output transistor to fail or overheat. Remember, the horizontal output transistor MUST be driven into full saturation in order to lower the Vce as much as possible. If the transistor is not driven to full saturation, a resistance is developed between collector and emitter. V=IR so the IR drop creates a much higher than normal power dissipation (P=IV) and that translates into BIG HEAT! By the way, if that last sentence didn't make any sense to you, don't sweat it.

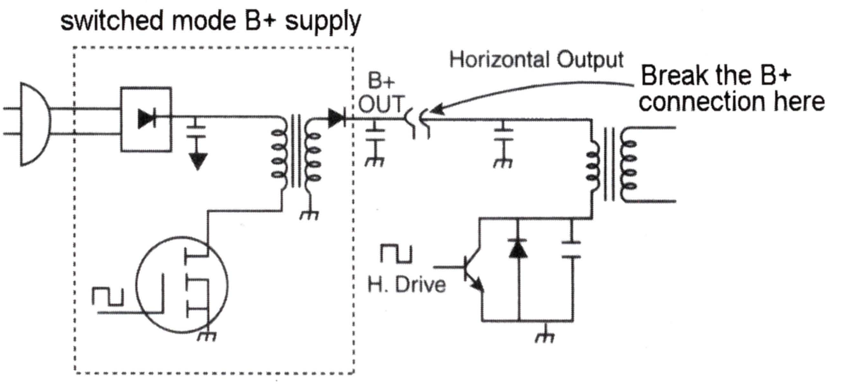


Fig. 2: Typical B+ voltage path and recommended location to open the B+ path when subbing with the Substitute B+ Supply.

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The HA2500's "Sub Drive" feature provides a substitute horizontal drive that will drive either the base of a bipolar horizontal output transistor or the gate of a MOSFET output transistor. This is another extremely cool test as it allows you to isolate horizontal problems by driving the output stage with a known good signal. Substituting for missing or suspected bad horizontal drive enables you to test the horizontal output components. Sub Drive isolates weak, intermittent, erratic or noisy drive signal problems which cause improper horizontal output operation and/or horizontal output transistor failure.

USING THE SUBSTITUTE POWER SUPPLY

The HA2500's substitute B+ supply permits testing of the horizontal output stage and high voltage/deflection regulators to full operating voltages independent of the chassis B+ power supply. This lets you identify defective high voltage components without risking damage to the chassis power supply. This is sure a common problem with the Wells-Gardner K7000 series where a shorted horizontal output transistor often takes out the voltage regulator, IC4.

The substitute B+ supply helps troubleshoot breakdown failures of horizontal output components which result in high current loading of the chassis B+ supply at or near full operating voltages. Breakdown failures often quickly damage the horizontal output transistor and power supply components leaving little time to isolate the cause. By using the substitute power supply and gradually increasing the B+ supply voltage to the horizontal output stage, these problems can be isolated.

Other chassis symptoms can be isolated quickly with the substitute B+ supply. Symptoms of reduced B+ voltage to the output stage, X-ray shutdown or momentary high voltage, vertical noises on the CRT picture, intermittents, start-up problems and others can be isolated quickly by substituting the B+ supply voltage horizontal output stage and HV/deflection regulator.

The HA2500's substitute B+ supply is a variable DC power supply adjustable from 30 to 180 volts. It's designed to substitute for the full range of chassis B+ power supply voltages found in any brand or model.

The power output from the substitute B+ supply is determined by the voltage selected with the VOLTS control and the amount of current flowing to the chassis (P=IV.) The substitute B+ supply outputs over 80 watts for voltages greater than 40 volts. At voltages between 30 and 40 volts, the substitute B+ supply output current is limited to 2 amps, reducing the total power output to 60 watts.

The POWER LIMIT control provides an adjustment to reduce the maximum power output of the substitute B+ supply. At the "MIN" setting, the substitute B+ supply outputs 3 watts or less. At mid-range, the maximum power output is reduced to 1/2 or 40 watts for voltages ranging from 40-180 volts. Limiting the output power causes the maximum current output of the substitute B+ supply to change with the output voltage according to the power formula. For example, at an output of 160 volts, approximately .5 amps can be output (80 watts). At an output of 80 volts, approximately 1 amp can be output. As the POWER LIMIT control is reduced, the maximum output current is reduced accordingly.

A LIMITING light, located to the right of the POWER LIMIT control, illuminates when the output voltage times current of the substitute B+ supply is greater than the POWER LIMIT setting. When in limiting, the substitute B+ supply cannot further increase its output voltage or current. Increasing the setting of the VOLTS control during limiting does not increase the output voltage or the voltage shown in the digital display.

The fluorescent digital display above the VOLTS control indicates the voltage and current outputs of the substitute B+ supply simultaneously. This is so darned handy! After working on a few monitors, you'll know exactly what's normal and what's not. This is also a great educational tool as well. Knowing exactly what's going on in a working circuit helps you pinpoint failures when things go awry. The voltage measurement is sampled at the B+ supply output jacks for an accurate indication of the output voltage. The current readout indicates the level of output current from the substitute B+ supply.

When the VOLTS Control is set to "OFF", the substitute B+ supply output is reduced to near 0 volts. If connections are made from the B+ supply output jack to the chassis, the volts readout reads the voltage present at the chassis test points so you can use the HA2500 as a digital multimeter as well!

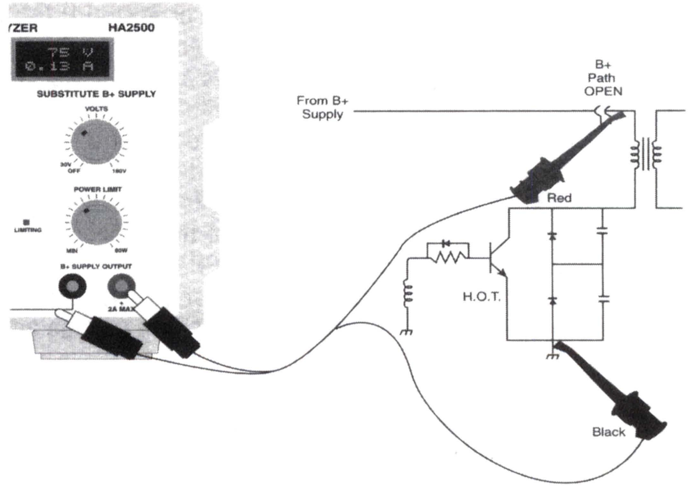


Fig. 3: Connections for substituting for the chassis B+ voltage to the horizontal output stage with the HA2500 Substitute B+ Supply.

UNDERSTANDING CHASSIS B+ VOLTAGE SUBSTITUTION

It's pretty obvious that using a substitute B+ supply requires that the chassis B+ power supply path to the horizontal output stage be opened. This prevents the chassis B+ voltage from reaching the horizontal output stage. Once the chassis B+ voltage path is opened, the HA2500's substitute B+ supply is connected and used to provide the B+ voltage to the horizontal output stage. You've got to be sure about this when you do it. Failure to open the chassis B+ supply path may damage the chassis power supply and/or the HA2500 as you will have both power supplies on simultaneously. You may get lucky and have to unsolder only one end of a resistor or coil in order to isolate the chassis B+ power supply. In the worst case, you'll have to cut a trace but try like heck to find another alternative. I hate to see trace-cutting where there is a viable alternative.

If you do not have a schematic you can identify the B+ input pin to the horizontal output stage flyback or coil using a combination of methods. Trace from the collector of the horizontal output transistor to the output coil or flyback transformer. Use an ohmmeter to identify windings with continuity to the collector trace and note components connected to these circuit board traces. The B+ voltage input commonly has a bypass capacitor of 47uf to 100uf to ground. This is the cap that fails often in all monitors. Just to give you an idea, it's part number C57 in the Wells-Gardner k7000 series monitors.

Once you have identified the B+ input path to the horizontal output stage flyback or coil, open a coil, resistor, or wire trace jumper to open the B+ voltage path. (See Fig. 1.)

The B+ voltage output from the main power supply can be identified on the schematic or board by finding the largest DC output voltage or highest DC voltage rated filter capacitor on the output side of the switch mode power supply transformer. Trace the B+ supply output voltage to the horizontal output stage. A coil or jumper may be unsoldered and lifted from the board to open the B+ output voltage path. When opening the B+ voltage path near the switching power supply circuitry, be careful not to open the feedback voltage path for the regulator control of the switch mode power supply.

With the chassis B+ path opened, connect the B+ supply lead clips from the B+ supply output jack to the chassis. The AC voltage to the chassis should be turned off and the VOLTS control should be set to OFF when connecting and disconnecting test leads. Connect the black banana jack to the black B+ supply output jack and the black clip to the horizontal circuit ground of the chassis. Connect the red banana jack to the red B+ supply output Jack (+) and to the horizontal output side of the opened B+ voltage path.

When substituting for the chassis B+ voltage, start at a reduced voltage or power level. This creates reduced voltages and currents in the horizontal output stage. Operating at a reduced voltage or power does not harm or threaten the horizontal output stage. Slowly increase the voltage or power until full operation of the horizontal output stage is reached or you see, hear or smell something wrong.

The VOLTS and POWER LIMIT controls provide the versatility needed to operate the horizontal output stage at reduced levels and increase it to normal operating levels. Start with the VOLTS control to OFF and set the POWER LIMIT control to a power setting near the anticipated power demand. If you are unsure of the normal power demand, set the POWER LIMIT to 1/2 scale (approx.40 watts.) This is a good starting point to limit current in the event of a breakdown problem. You may need to increase the POWER LIMIT control as you near full operating voltages.

Substituting the B+ isolates symptoms to either the B+ power supply of the chassis or the horizontal output stage. Identify the B+ voltage path of the chassis between the output of the power supply regulator and the B+ input pin of the flyback transformer. Refer to the schematic when possible to identify the B+ input to the flyback or horizontal output coil.

Substitute the chassis B+ voltage with the HA2500's substitute B+ supply following the steps outlined here. If the monitor fires up and you get your high voltage, the horizontal output stage is functioning normally. To verify, you can measure high voltage, focus, and/or screen voltages to confirm that you have normal output voltages from the horizontal output stage. Basically, if it works, it works!

If the chassis power supply and signal processing stages are functional, the CRT of the monitor can be used to determine if the horizontal output stage is working properly. Apply a video signal to the display. A near normal video on the CRT indicates normal high voltage and/or deflection is being generated by the horizontal output stage.

You will use the HA2500's Dynamic Tests (see part 2 of this article in next month's Play Meter) to determine abnormal or normal operation of the horizontal output stage when substituting for the chassis B+ voltage. Stay tuned!

For More Information, contact Sencore, 3200 Sencore Drive, Sioux Falls, SD 57107; toll-free: 800-SENCORE (736-2673); fax: (605)339-0317; or Web site: (www.sencore.com).

Author's note: I have some exciting projects in the works for the upcoming months, including a technical look at Arcade PCs and Quantum3D's game controller interface, SNK's new Neo-Print photo sticker machine, The Technical Olympics at the ASI show March 26th - 28th in Las Vegas (708/333-9292 or fax 708/333-4086), an Arcade School in London, England April 6th through 10th, and one in Las Vegas May 11-15, 1998.

As usual, if you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to contact me, 1944 Falmouth Dr., El Cajon, CA 92020-2827; (619)593.6131; fax (619)593.6132; Web site: (http://randyfromm.com); or e-mail (randy@randyfromm.com).

That's all for now. See you at the Arcade School! ▲

MERIT INDUSTRIES World Series of Darts stops in Kentucky, Nevada

No-Pro Singles winners in Nevada, (l-r): Jeff Hubbard and John Ooms and Barbara Woods of the Sands Regency.

The Merit Industries World Series of Darts made two recent stops in Reno, Nev., for the Seventh Annual Silver State Classic and Louisville, Ky., for the debut of the Kentucky Klassic.

Special thanks went out went to the following companies that supported the Reno event: Mountain Coin, Tip Top Amusements, Reno Game Sales, Cricket & Co., Tri-Vending, and the Sands Regency, which put up the entire purse and gave $100 to a randomly-picked entrant in each of the 10 events. Co-sponsored by JP Amusements, the Kentucky Klassic drew players from all over the Midwest to compete. Laramie Screen Printing was also on hand to show its wares.

Pro Doubles winners Lyle Herrick (l) and Jim Newburg (r) and Merit's Tom Horne at the Silver State Classic.

In addition to the usual array of fun events, year-long participation in World Series tournaments enable pro-rated players to qualify for a place on one of the teams representing the United States and non-pros to compete in the Scorpion Challenge, a handicapped singles event.

Both of these culminate in huge payoffs at the Ultimate Game Challenge, a $60,000-event taking place in Orlando, Fla., in August. For more information, call Scorpion darts, (800)300-5281 or check out the company's Web site, (http://www.scorpiondarts.com).

Here's a look at the final results:

SILVER STATE CLASSIC

Draw Doubles: 1st—Bobby Soltys of Denver, Colo., and Jim Newburg of Phoenix, Ariz.; 2nd—Bud Gaither of San Jose, Calif., and Tom Gall of Vancouver, Wash.; 3rd—Kenny Doyle of Orlando, Fla., and Billy Gee of Reno, Nev.

No-Pro Doubles: 1st—Mark Firestone and Tony Ashworth, both of Lynnwood, Wash.; 2nd—Willy Collins of Salinas, Calif., and Bob Aronson of Crystal Bay, Nev.; 3rd—Jason Marlowe and Brian Traversie, both of Sparks, Nev.

Pro Singles winner Larry Schramm (r) and runner up Hank Kline (l) with Merit's Carrie Walsh at the Kentucky Klassic.

No-Pro Singles: 1st—John Ooms of Delta, B.C.; 2nd—Jeff Hubbard of Santa Clarita, Calif.; 3rd—Oscar Viveros of Seattle, Wash.

Pro Singles: 1st—Kenny Doyle of Orlando, Fla.; 2nd—Thom Johnson of Largo, Fla.; 3rd—Mikey Christian of Anaheim, Calif.

Women's Doubles: 1st—Kelly Sipe of Seattle, Wash., and Lenna Shiley of Renton, Wash.; 2nd—Teena-Marie Cunningham of Van Nuys, Calif., and Corinne Stockton of Sacramento, Calif.; 3rd—Kathy Maloney of Tampa, Fla., and Linda Landi of St. Petersburg, Fla.

Women's Singles: 1st—Teena-Marie Cunningham of Van Nuys, Calif.; 2nd—Lenna Shiley of Renton, Wash.; 3rd—Kathy Maloney of Tampa, Fla.

Open Four Person: 1st—Sean Downs of Colton, Calif.; Paul Lim and Aaron Peele, both of San Bernardino, Calif.; and Teena-Marie Cunningham of Van Nuys, Calif.; 2nd—Lyle Herrick of Tuscon, Ariz.; Jim Newburg of Phoenix, Ariz.; Dave Metcalf of West Corinn, Calif.; and Brian Conyers of Corinna, Calif.; 3rd—Jim Nolan and Rich Rohme, both of San Jose, Calif.; James Lee of Oakland, Calif.; and Troy Bleakmore of Sunnyville, Calif.

From Kentucky, (l-r): No-Pro Singles runner up Kerry Dodge, Nancy and James Price of JP Amusements, and No-Pro Singles winner Tony Mitchell.

Mixed Triples: 1st—Teena-Marie Cunningham of Van Nuys, Calif.; Paul Lim of San Bernardina, Calif.; and Sean Downs of Colton, Calif.; 2nd—Kathy Maloney of Tampa, Fla.; Kenny Doyle of Orlando, Fla.; and Thom Johnson of Largo, Fla.; 3rd—Debbie Lamb and William Moore, both of Normal, Ill., and Hank Nelson of Danvers, Ill.

Pro Doubles: 1st—Jim Newburg of Phoenix, Ariz., and Lyle Herrick of Tuscon, Ariz.; 2nd—Kenny Doyle and Jerry Driskill, both of Orlando, Fla.; 3rd—Paul Lim of San Bernardino, Calif., and Sean Downs of Colton, Calif.

KENTUCKY KLASSIC

Second Chance Blind Draw: 1st—Richard Oger of Kokomo, Ind., and Larry Schramm of Jacksonville, Fla.; 2nd—Brian Pike of Brandenburg, Ky., and James Polk of Louisville, Ky.; 3rd—Mario Beeler of Louisville, Ky., and Don Brown of Dayton, Ohio.

Scorpion Challenge: 1st—Randy Purnhagen of Lewisburg, Ohio; 2nd—Todd Jones of Brandenburg, Ky.; 3rd—Troy McDonald of Louisville, Ky.

Women's Doubles 501: Mia Gutierrez and Roxanne Spears, both of Indianapolis, Ind.; 2nd—Kerry Popp of Jeffersonville, Ind., and Vicki Richards of New Salisbury, Ind.; 3rd—Angela Atteberry and Rebecca Dix, both of Louisville, Ky.

No-Pro Singles: 1st—Tony Mitchell of Columbus, Ohio; 2nd—Kerry Dodge of Elkhardt, Ind., 3rd—Sean McFall of Columbus, Ohio.

Women's Doubles 501/Cricket: 1st—Angela Atteberry and Rebecca Dix, both of Louisville, Ky.; 2nd—Kerry Popp of Jeffersonville, Ind.; and Vicki Richards of New Salisbury, Ind.; 3rd—Shawn Dockemeyer of Henderson, Ky., and Lisa Rossignol of Princeton, Ind.

Pro Singles: 1st—Larry Schramm of Jacksonville, Fla.; 2nd—Hank Kline of Elkhart, Ind.; 3rd—Tom Brooks of Indianapolis, Ind.

Open Four-Person: 1st—Ralph Simmerman, Ed Khelseau, Darryl Lawson, and Butch Schilling, all of Indianapolis, Ind.; 2nd—Thom Johnson of Largo, Fla.; Larry Schramm of Jacksonville, Fla., and Alivin Reynolds and Travis Brown, both of New Port Richey, Fla.

Mixed Triples: 1st—Roxanne Spears, Tom Brooks, Doug Griffith, all of Indianapolis, Ind.; 2nd—Amy Logsdon and Chris Horton, both of Indianapolis, Ind., and Alyn Harding of Port Richey, Fla.; 3rd—Mary Thatcher and Hank Kline, both of Elkhart, Ind., and Dave Martin of Orlando, Fla.

No-Pro Doubles: 1st—Tracy Sheppard and Ed Heuker, both of New Bremen, Ind.; 2nd—Kerry Dodge of Elkhart, Id, and Ray Bennet of Goshen, Ind.; 3rd—Gordon Perkins of Morris Hill, Ind., and Jeff Giblert of N. Vernon, Ind.

Pro Doubles: 1st—Larry Schramm of Jacksonville, Fla., and Thom Johnson of Largo, Fla.; 2nd—Chris Horton and Ed Khelseau, both of Indianapolis, Ind.; 3rd—Tom Brooks and Doug Griffith, both of Indianapolis, Ind.

Women's Singles: 1st—Mia Gutierrez of Indianapolis, Ind.; 2nd—Roxanne Spears of Indianapolis, Ind.; 3rd—Mary Thatcher of Elkhart, Ind. ▲

Randy Fromm
EXCLUSIVELY
FROM
PLAY METER
Magazine

SPORTING
EDGE

ADA sponsors two dart events in Massachusetts

Darters from eight states converged in western Massachusetts for two major darting events held in Holyoke: the Old Timer's Tournament and the 4th Bud Light Dart League Northeast Regional Championship. Both were sponsored by the American Darters Association (ADA).

Stefanelli's Bar & Grill hosted the Old Timer's Tournament in conjunction with the 20th anniversary of the Western Massachusetts Darting Association (WMDA).

Members who participated in the WMDA from 1977 to 1987 were eligible. "It was really great to see so many old friends," remarked Glenn Remick, president of the ADA and founder of the WMDA.

Soon after, the Holiday Inn hosted the Bud Light event that awarded over $11,000 in prize money. Trophies were presented in Open, Men's, and Women's categories. This was the largest prize purse ever awarded in darts competition in western Massachusetts.

Here's a look at the final results:

Neutralizer Steel-Tip

Draw Doubles, Cricket: 1st–Mike Ciaschini and Elaine Binns; 2nd–Carrie Barringer and Chip Nuthlmar.

Women's Doubles, 301/Cricket: 1st–Karen Lebel and Gail Thibeault; 2nd–Melissa Nestor and Carrie Barringer.

Men's Doubles, 301/Cricket: 1st–Mike Sheridan and Larry Nitch; 2nd–John Walsh and Bill Rocheleau.

Singles, 301: 1st–Bill Rocheleau; 2nd–Karen Lebel.

Draw Doubles, Cricket: 1st–Billy Brooks and Ralph Page; 2nd–Mike Ciaschini and Elaine Binns.

Mixed Triples, Cricket: 1st–Kathy Sevarino, Gary Freeman, and Mike Jodoine; 2nd–Bill Rocheleau, Gail Thibeault, and Fran Martell.

Women's Singles: 1st–Gail Thibeault; 2nd–Mary Petriano.

Singles, 301: 1st–John Walsh; 2nd–Jeff Bouchen.

Open Soft-Tip

Draw Doubles, Cricket: 1st–Glenn Luqus and Anjel Saniajo; 2nd–Nancy Booth and Carolyn Mars.

Men's Doubles, 301/Cricket: 1st–Dana Buxton and Gordon Tully; 2nd–Anjel Saniajo and Mike Hernandez.

Women's Doubles, 301/Cricket: 1st–Pam Reed and Jeanette Fleury; 2nd–Gayle DeMaio and Carolyn Mars.

Singles, 501 (SS/DO): 1st–Rick Sargent; 2nd–Carolyn Mars.

Draw Doubles, Cricket: 1st–Mike Hernandez and Brian Ingersol; 2nd–Carolyn Mars and Steve Smead.

Mixed Triples, Cricket: 1st–Glenn Luqus, Carolyn Mars, and Mike Hernandez; 2nd–Charlie Maaonus, Steve Smead, and Angela Sarbieski.

Singles, 501 (SS/DO): 1st–Steve Smead; 2nd–Larry Yourman.

Open Steel-Tip

Draw Doubles, Cricket: 1st–Mike Kulik and Joe Marchetti; 2nd–Dave Morrisette and Dan Smith.

Men's Doubles, Cricket: 1st–Steve Smead and Charlie Macunas; 2nd–Joe Marchetti and Gary Yourman.

Women's Doubles, Cricket: 1st–Joanne Parry and Nancy Verge; 2nd–Marilyn Popp and Angela Sarbieski.

Singles, 501 (SS/DO): 1st–Frank Adamczyk; 2nd–Michael Coffey.

Draw Doubles, Cricket: 1st–Gary Yourman and Billy Conant; 2nd–Rick Stak and Mike Steffancici.

Mixed Triples, Cricket: 1st–Mike Padomski, Mike Ciaschini, and Joanne Parry; 2nd–Ossie Scgado, Jan Fuller, and Wayne Fuller.

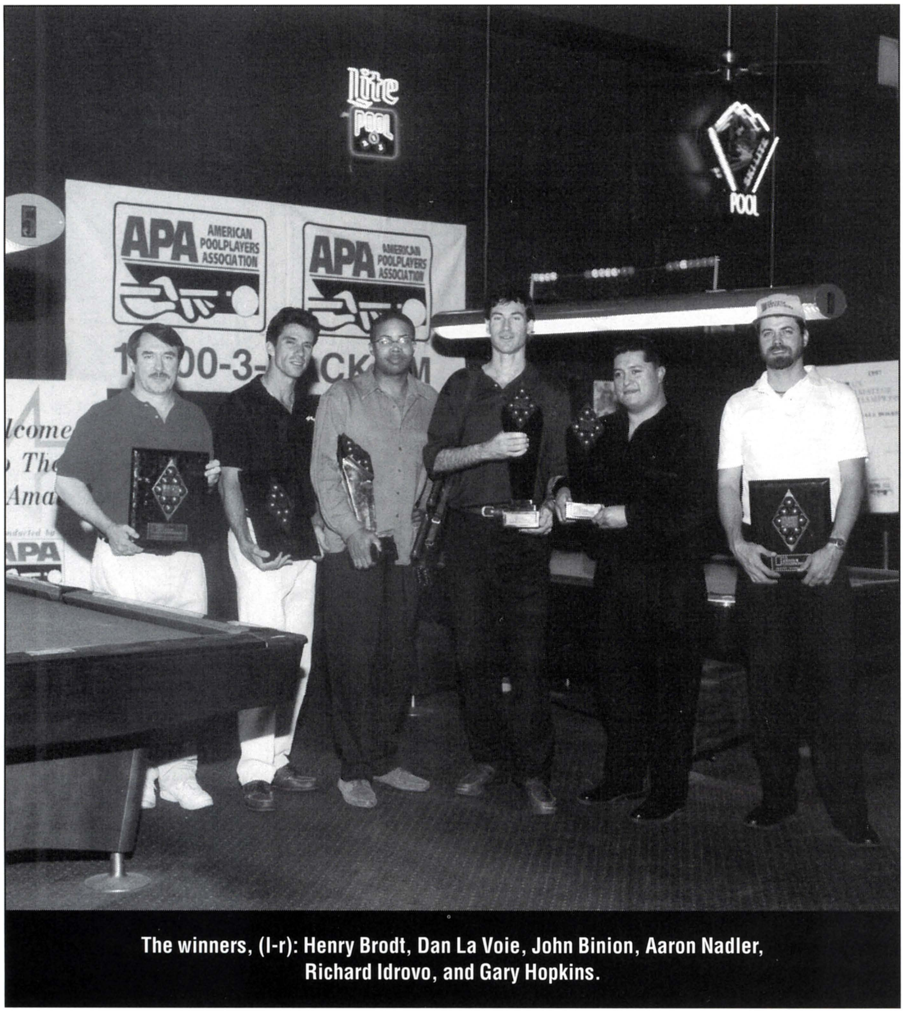
Women's Singles, 501 (SS/DO): 1st–Joanne Parry; 2nd– Dale Remick.

Singles, 501 (SS/DO): 1st–Mike Ciaschini; 2nd–Wayne Fuller.

For more information, contact local ADA league operator Jon Waidlich, (413)659-3094, or ADA, (888)327-8752. ▲

First Place winners in Draw Doubles, Open Soft-Tip: Mike Hernandez and Brian Ingersoll.

APA Amateur event lights up Las Vegas


The winners, (l-r): Henry Brodt, Dan La Voie, John Binion, Aaron Nadler, Richard Idrovo, and Gary Hopkins.

The fourth annual American Poolplayers Association's (APA) U.S. Amateur Championship, held at the Las Vegas Cue Club, drew 128 finalists from 27 states and Canada to light up the town with their talents in 8-Ball and 9-Ball. Each player enjoyed lodging at the Four Queens Hotel & Casino compliments of the APA.

After two days of intense pocket billiards action, only two players remained, Aaron Nadler of Santa Cruz, Calif., and John Binion of Detroit, Mich. In their only previous meeting Binion beat Nadler seven to three in the 15th round of play.

However, this time Nadler pocketed the 8-ball in game 15 for an 11 to seven win over Binion. "I got breaks when I needed them and made key shots at the right moments," Nadler explained.

"The competition was fierce, but I had a great time," added Binion. Both Nadler and Binion took home commemorative awards, bottles of champagne, and event jackets, along with paid entry fee, air fare, and lodging to the 1998 U.S. Open where they will shoot with the pros.

Ritchie Idrovo of Summit, Ill., placed third. Fourth place honors went to Gary Hopkins of Spencer, Tenn. Fifth place finishers were Henry Brodt of Glenview, Ill., and Dan LaVoie of Mount Dora, Fla.

In addition to the U.S. Amateur, the APA conducts the Camel Pool League National Team Championship, the APA 9-Ball National Team Championship, and the Camel 8-Ball Classic Singles Championship. For more information, call (800)372-2536. ▲

INTERNATIONAL SCENE

ITPS WINS CONSULTING CONTRACT FOR THEME PARK IN PHILIPPINES

International Theme Park Services and Amtrust Holdings have reached an agreement that will retain ITPS for consultation on operational services for one year at the Enchanted Kingdom Theme Park in Manila, Philippines. The contract comes after the completion of ITPS' pre-opening consulting services and three-year management assistance contract through the assignment of a director of maintenance and safety.

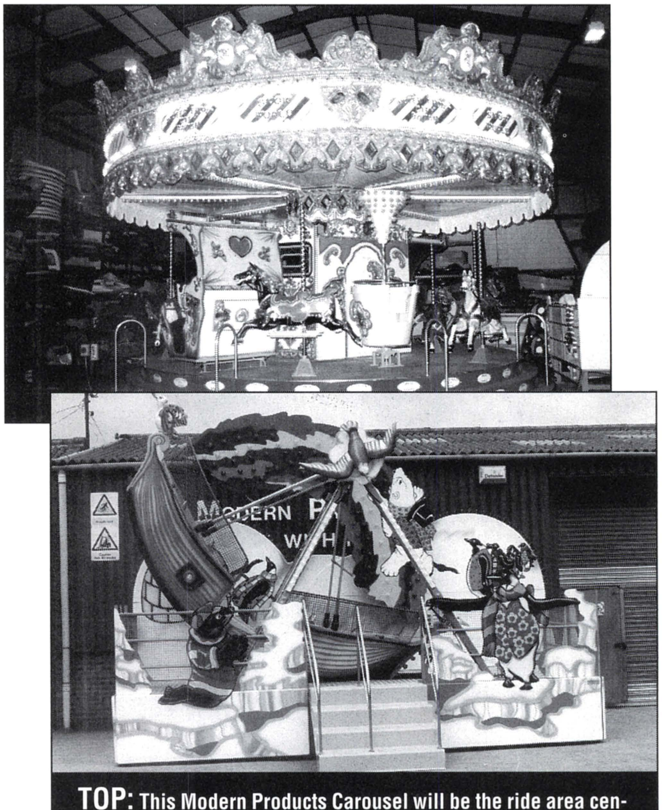
The agreement provides for monthly consultation in all areas of park operations including rides, admissions, entertainment, safety, security, grounds, housekeeping, and maintenance. ITPS also will conduct an audit of Enchanted Kingdom focusing on the maintenance and safety of the entire facility. According to Ken Vondriska, senior vice president of ITPS, "These audits will ensure that the positive safety record already in place at the park will be maintained. Enchanted Kingdom is an icon among parks in the Philippines and this will help maintain its position as one of the top parks in not only the Philippines but throughout Southeast Asia."

ITPS is headquarted in Cincinnati, Ohio (USA), (513)381-6131; fax (513)381-2756.

MODERN PRODUCTS SHIPS RIDES TO INDONESIA

United Kingdom's amusement ride manufacturer Modern Products has just shipped a number of major rides to a new family entertainment development called Snow World Indonesia. The facility is slated for a late February opening.

In keeping with the overall theme, a Modern Products carousel will form the center of a ride area inside a gigantic Snow Dome. Other rides for the project are the Junior Pirate Ship themed with polar bears, penguins, seals, and an Aurora Borealis backdrop; the Ski Lift that recreates the excitement of traveling up high slopes; and the Track Ride features a train of sleigh cars pulled by lifelike reindeer to move guests around the vast Snow Dome. The Track Ride runs around and under a giant ski slope. Modern Products can be reached at 44-1724-783157; fax 44-1724-782120.



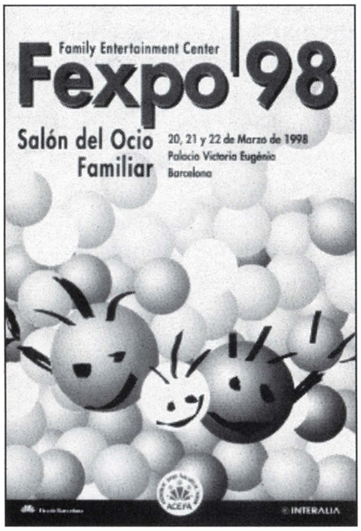
TOP: This Modern Products Carousel will be the ride area centerpiece at Snow World Indonesia's Snow Dome.

BOTTOM: The Junior Pirate Ship for Snow World Indonesia is themed with polar bears, seals, and penguins.

FIRST FEXPO SET FOR SPAIN

The first edition of Fexpo '98, the Family Entertainment Fair, is scheduled for Barcelona, Spain, at the Montjuic Trade Fair Centre, March 20-22. The three-day gathering

INTERNATIONAL SCENE



is the first and only trade fair in Europe devoted solely to family entertainment.

Fexpo '98 is sponsored by ACEFA and organized by Interalia in collaboration with Fira de Barcelona. The host facility is the Palacio Victoria Eugenia, a historic building with a modern infrastructure next to the famous Montjuic fountain near Barcelona's central Plaza de Espana.

Show organizers describe the event as "the largest and most enjoyable FEC in Spain" featuring a wide range of supplies for children's playgrounds, fairgrounds, theme parks, aquatic parks, bowling centers, and restaurants. Products will include soft games, inflatables, miniature golf, sports games, kiddie rides, simulators, vending machines, prizes, gifts, novelties, technical equipment, and ancillary products and services.

The organizing committee, which consists of professionals in the family entertainment sector, have set forth the following goals for the first Fexpo: 1) to create a suitable environment to unite the sector's supply and demand; 2) to gather manufacturers, distributors, importers, operators, and service providers; 3) to encourage the exchange of ideas among companies in the entertainment and leisure industries; 4) to facilitate national and international trade between specialist firms in the sector; 5) to promote the orderly consumption of leisure industry products; and 6) to help professionalize the family entertainment sector. For more information, call (34-3)416-1466; fax (34-3)415-0095; e-mail (interali@teleline.es).

EXPO DIVERSIONES GEARS UP FOR SIXTH TRADE SHOW

C.P. Emilio Shahin Masso, president of Asociacion Internacional De Fabricantes De Aparatos De Diversion (AIFAD), invites entertainment industry members to join in the sixth Expo Diversiones trade show at the Guadalajara Convention Center in Mexico, June 16-21.

The event will be open to buyers June 18-20.

Expo Diversiones is described as the ideal setting for unveiling the latest products, technology, and services related to the leisure and amusement industries, shopping centers, fairs, and concessionaires. Amusement associations from several countries will be represented at the show, which provides a forum for making international contacts. For more information, call (3)614-30-15; fax (3)615-14-83.

INTERNATIONAL CALENDAR

March 11-12
India Amusement Expo. Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi. Call W.T. Glasgow Inc., (708)333-9292; fax (708)333-4086.

March 12-15
ENADA Spring Show, Rimini, Italy. Call 39-541-71-1711; fax 39-541-78-6686.

March 20-22
Fexpo '98, Montjuic Trade Fair Centre, Barcelona, Spain. Call (34-3)416-1466; fax (34-3)415-0095.

June 16-21
Expo-Diversiones '98, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Call (3)614-3015; fax (3)615-1483.

July 27-30
China Amusement Expo, Beijing, PRC. Call (852) 2865-2633; fax (852) 2866-1770.

August 5-6
EXIME, World Trade Center, Mexico City, Mexico. Call W.T. Glasgow Inc., (708)333-9292; fax (708)333-4086.

August 26-28
Asian Amusement Expo, Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Singapore. Call (703)836-4800, ext. 766; fax (703)836-4801.

September 17-20
36th JAMMA Show, Tokyo Big Sight, Tokyo, Japan. Call 81-3-3438-2363; fax 81-3-5472-7115.

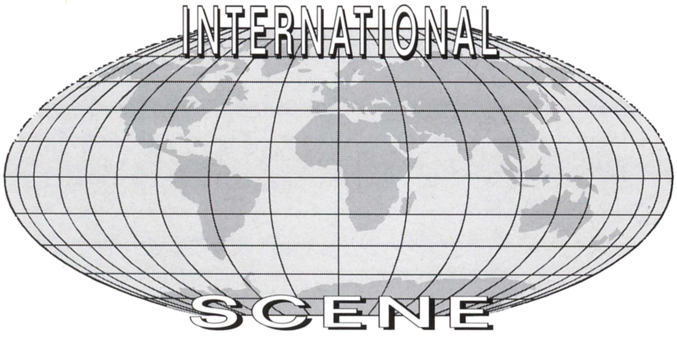
September 30-October 2
FER-Interazar, Madrid, Spain. Call 34-1-445-37-02; fax 34-1-594-30-05.

BOOKINGS STRONG FOR IMA '98

Interest from international markets is growing constantly, which leads IMA Trade Fair event director Petra Lassahn to predict that the fall trade show set for Nov. 18-21 in Frankfurt, Germany, will be the "central meeting point of the international coin-op machine industry."

According to project management firm Miller Freeman, so far 30 percent of the companies that have made firm bookings are not from the German market but from Europe and overseas. Spanish coin-op machine manufacturer Unidesa leads the list of Spanish firms; strong bookings are also noted from Italy and Britain. In addition, companies that have never displayed at IMA, or had taken a break, are showing interest. Luxembourg will be represented at IMA for the first time.

IMA is sponsored by VDAI, the German industry association for coin-op amusement and vending machines. For more information, call 49-211-90191-183 or 134; fax 49-211-90191-127; e-mail (plassahn@unmf.com).



INTERNATIONAL SCENE

THOMSON AND DYNAMAX FORM ALLIANCE

Thomson Entertainment, part of Thomson Training & Simulation, and Dynamax, the 3D simulation company, have agreed to a worldwide alliance giving Thomson distribution rights for Dynamax's product range. It also gives Dynamax access to Thomson's range of motion bases, which Dynamax will offer as an alternative to its own pneumatic motion system.

Thomson director and general manager Claude Bozzo and Dynamax president Francoise Mantello commented that the agreement is consistent with the strategy of offering a broader range of entertainment products and services.

In addition, Thomson has entered into two other agreements: with the high-tech firm SimGraphics Inc. whereby Thomson will become a worldwide agent for the SimGraphics Vactor VJ and Vactor Performer real-time computer animation systems; and with GreyStone Technology to develop, manufacture, and distribute the real-time 3D game XS-G for the Venturer S2i interactive two-seat simulator.

Thomson also announced a burst of new rides for 1998 including the computer-generated hover car adventure Thunder Drive commissioned from the Electric Film Factory. Thomson gained exclusive rights to other ride experiences including POD-The Ride from French PC game maker Ubisoft; Journey to the Future-Titan Probe, an exploration of Saturn's Titan moon; and Lair of the Dragon, developed by The Cupboard, a production company linked to the United Kingdom's multimedia education institution Bournemouth University.

Thomson director of business development and marketing Paula Bernard said, "Many companies in the simulation market now have access to a lot of the same rides, so exclusivity is one important way we can differentiate ourselves. We're sure that this crop of new exclusive rides will be immediate audience favorites, which will help give us a competitive edge."

Other titles confirmed as additions to the ride library are five films from New Wave International: Virtual Time Machine, Aqua Ride, Kid Coaster, Grand Prix, and Ocean Flight. Over 60 ride films are now in the Thomson library and several new ones are being negotiated for inclusion in 1998. Films for live-action enthusiasts include Jet Boat Dash and On the Hill, a nostalgic insight into the pioneering days of motor racing.

Distribution-wise, Thomson has appointed a number of new distributors and representatives around the world. In The Americas, agreements have been signed with Geyger Mailath in Chile and with Machinery S.A. in Ecuador, while C. Ehrenhaus will represent the company in Argentina. Jerry Monday and the Spirit Design Group will provide additional representation in the United States.

In Europe, the German distributor of the Venturer S2 family of products, Freizeit Simulatoren Betriebs, is extending its geographic coverage to Austria, Switzerland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Turkey, and the Scandinavian countries. French representative Jean-Luc Thorel of Simul-Action will extend his territory to include Belgium. Existing Scandinavian distributor Simulation Scandinavia will now cover the emerging former Soviet Baltic states. In Asia new representatives are Bara International in Korea and Servo-Hirsch in Vietnam. In the Middle East, MB Tech will represent Thomson in the United Arab Emirates.

In terms of personnel, Peter Wales has rejoined the company to take responsibility for the Asia/Pacific region. He will be based in Thomson's new Singapore office.

Web surfers can check out all the latest on Thomson at the company's site (www.thomsonentertainment.thomson-csf.com) where a new host character navigates site visitors around sections dealing with products, news, and a ride Top 10 with the option of viewing a short clip of the selected icon.

PLAYMAKERS DEBUTS NEW PRODUCTS AT ATEI

European toy distributor Playmakers Ltd. launched several new products at the Amusement Trade Exhibition International in London last month. Playmakers, which has served the amusement industry since 1979, showcased its soft toys and redemption prizes that include the Cuddly Alien and a selection of football products launched to coincide with the World Cup Year.

The company prides itself on high quality, solid design, and product safety. All items are tested to meet the stringent requirements of the European Toy Safety Standard BS5665/EN71. Playmakers has a 100,000-square-foot warehouse, office, and showroom complex in Scarborough, North Yorkshire, England, 44-1482-328650; fax 44-1482-215934.

The Cuddly Alien, one of many Playmakers' toys shown at ATEI.

JAMMA AND AMOA SHOW DATES OVERLAP

In Japan, 1998 show dates for JAMMA are Sept. 17-20 at the Tokyo Big Sight. In the United States, show dates for AMOA are Sept. 17-19 in Nashville, Tenn. An explanation for the overlap of major trade events appeared recently in Japan's Game Machine. Apparently, while show dates are scheduled years in advance in other parts of the world, in Japan the time frame is only one year ahead and the show sites "hold the initiative when negotiating the show dates." ▲

INTEGRAELITE KIOSK

EMF Corp. presents its IntegraElite, the first comprehensive, fully-integrated pedestal kiosk featuring a sleek profile and small footprint designed, engineered, and integrated for use in areas where space is a premium.

The kiosks support information- and transaction-based applications for a wide range of markets including entertainment venues and is an ideal way to promote products and services and provide Internet and Intranet access.

It houses a Pentium PC running Windows 95, wide-view 12" LCD touch screen display, stereo sound system, CD player, and sound card. With full PC functionality, it can use any standard PCI or ISA card.

Standard options include a credit card reader, modem, network card, receipt and voucher printer, uninterrupted power supply, and Windows NT. The unit can also be customized for unique customer needs.

For more information, contact EMF Corp., (425)883-0045 or (800)285-3630; fax (425)883-7222; Web site (http://www.emfcorp.com).

ELECTRONIC PERSONALIZING SYSTEMS

The Cawley Co., which specializes in name badges and awards, announces its new electronic personalizing systems for corporate or special event name badges. The P-1, P-2, P-3A, and P-4 units make use of products from Brother including the PT-12N, PT-8000, PT-540, and P-TouchPC respectively to produce on-the-spot, re-usable personalized badges.

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The P-1 unit from Cawley features single-line personalizing with one TC-10 tape, six batteries, and a complete organizational kit. Cawley's P-2 offers multiline personalizing with TX-11511 tape, AC adaptor, and complete organizational kit.

Multiline personalizing with TZ-131 tape, six batteries, and an organizational kit showcase the P-3A, while the P-4 unit offers icon-based Windows and Macintosh software, printer driver, serial cables for IBM- and Macintosh-compatible computers, TX-2511, and the organization kit.

For more information, contact The Cawley Co., (920)682-7754 or (800)822-9539; fax (920)682-5520.

MCM ELECTRONICS CATALOG

MCM Electronics, a leader in the distribution of consumer electronic repair parts and accessories, has published its newest catalog which features more than 4,000 new products.

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For a free copy of the catalog, contact MCM Electronics, (937)434-0031 or (800)543-4330; fax (937)434-6959; Web site (http://www.mcmelectronics.com).

UV/FX 3D SCENERY

Ultra-violet visual effects scenic specialist UV/FX Scenic Productions announces its newest product, UV/FX 3D scenery, making it possible to take stock scenery and introduce a glow through UV or black light illumination. Combining this effect with 3D glasses produces a look that features depth perception and color separation for striking visual effects.

The new UV 3D scenic technique can be designed to be visible, partially visible, or completely invisible under ambient lighting situations and then dramatically transformed with the introduction of UV lighting. This produces an immersive, virtual reality-like environment.

For more information, contact UV/FX Scenic Productions, (310)392-6817; fax (310)392-6817; e-mail (uvfx@uvfx.com); Web site (http://www.uvfx.com).

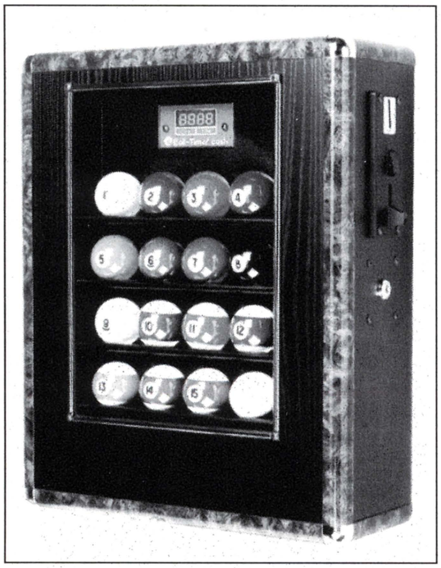
WESTOUCH

Westrex International debuts a new point-of-sale operation (POS) system that integrates PC and touch screen technology for entertainment locations including arcades, casinos, and restaurants. Measuring 13.5" wide x 11.2"deep x 2.8" high, the unit is compact yet powerful.

WesTouch is an open system equipped with a standard 10.4" DSTN pressure-sensitive touch screen and a Pentium CPU for high performance with any system or server. It is network ready with built-in 10base T Ethernet connections and eight additional interface ports to connect to multiple POS peripherals. Additional features include video RAM to support high-resolution graphics and nine I/O ports.

For more information, contact Westrex International, (617)254-1200; fax (617)254-6848; e-mail (info@westrex.com); Web site (http://www.westrex.com).

BALL-TIMER SYSTEMS



Ball-Timer Zeitabrechnungs Systeme Gmbh announces its series of Ball-Timer Time Accounting Systems which vend a set of pool balls for a calculated amount of money. Units are available that work with a coin slot or card reader or in conjunction with an attendant.

In each case, the pool balls are vended from the unit which then calculates the fee for use based on the time that elapses until they are returned. The cash unit requires a pre-set fee to vend the balls, and then sound an alarm when the time is up; that alarm is de-activated only when the balls are returned or more money is inserted.

The unit not only eliminates having to clear blocked ball returns, broken mechanisms, etc., but it also provides security, accountability, control of money, and a variable rate adjustment for different periods of the day or season.

For more information, contact Ball-Timer Zeitabrechnungs Systeme Gmbh , 49-6063-2051; fax 49-6063-1833; Web site (http://www.abcsoftware.com/Ball-Timer).

CP2000E BALL CLEANER

CleanPlay Inc. presents the CP2000E ball cleaning and sanitizing unit designed as a fast, compact, and mobile solution to the growing awareness among parents about the potential for spreading germs in ball pits.

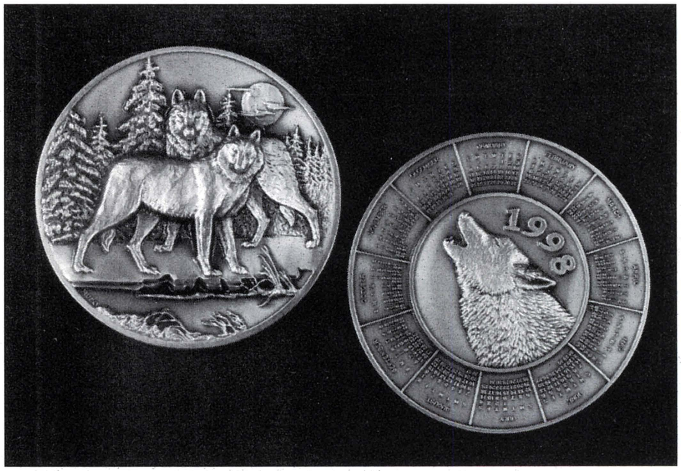
The unit is microbiologically certified and utilizes an extremely safe sanitant that requires no after rinse. A polyethylene shell also gives the CP2000E its dent resistant property. Like all CP2000 units, it operates on tap water and a standard 110 volt outlet.

Special DC connections are available, and all units are GFI protected. Compared to other worm drive or forced air units which clean one ball at a time, the CP2000E uses a batch process to clean the balls.

For more information, contact CleanPlay Inc., (717)560-9935 or (888)560-9935; fax (717)560-0773.

WOLVES CALENDAR MEDAL

Hoffman Mint introduces its 1998 Calendar Medal entitled Wolves, the newest addition to the company's collection of solid bronze calendar medals commemorating North America's threatened animals.



The medal depicts a beautifully sculpted pair of wolves on the front and contains a meticulously detailed 1998 calendar centered around a howling wolf head on the back. Calendar medals date back three centuries, and the concept was revived in its modern incarnation in 1930.

Each solid bronze medal has been painstakingly crafted in collaboration with the finest artisans in the nation. From Caesar Rufo's sculpture, a team of Hoffman Mint craftsmen created intricately engraved dies with which to strike the 3" diameter, half-pound medal.

For more information, contact Hoffman Mint, (800)227-5813; fax (408)649-3318. ▲

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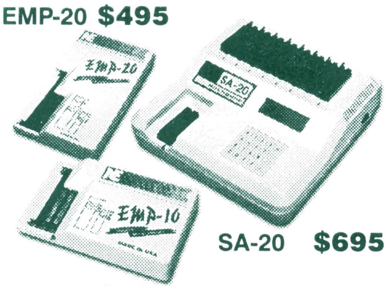

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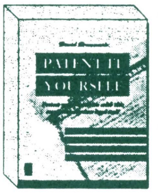

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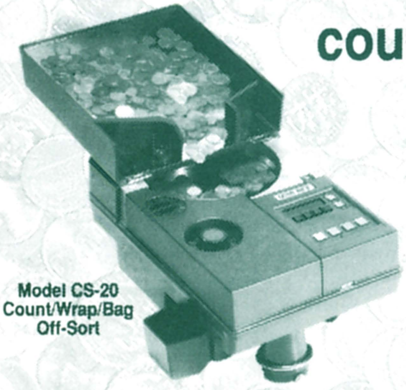

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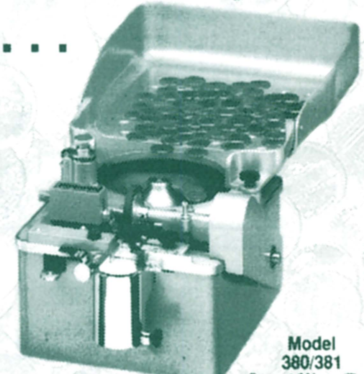

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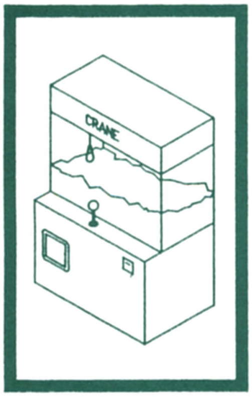

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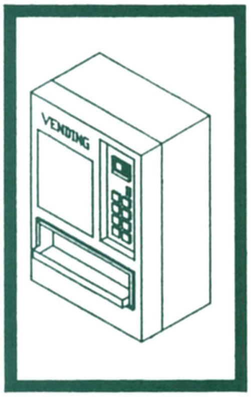

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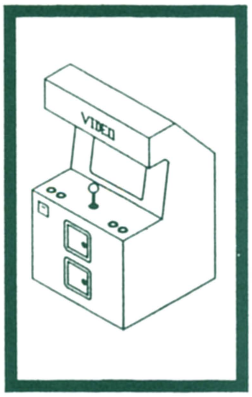

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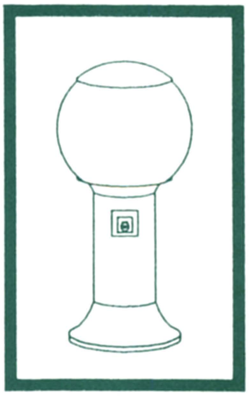

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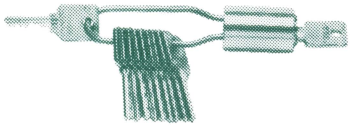

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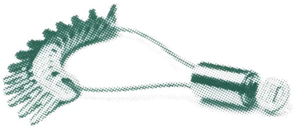

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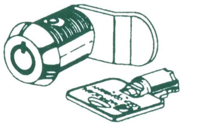

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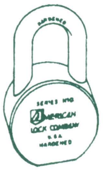

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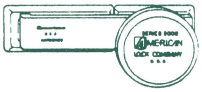

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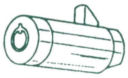

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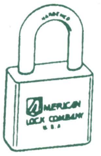

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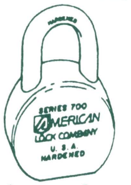

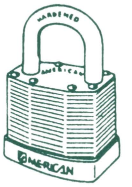

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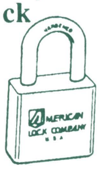

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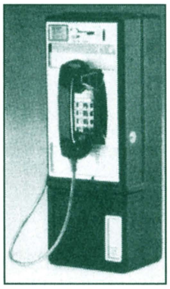

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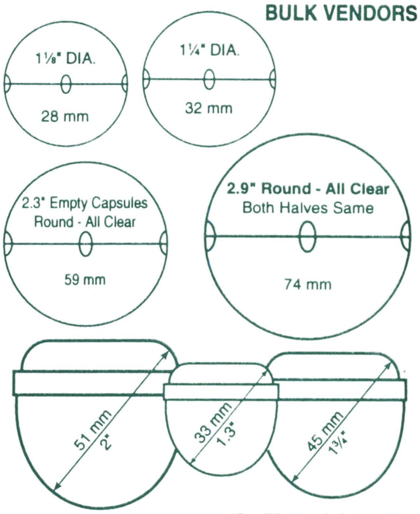
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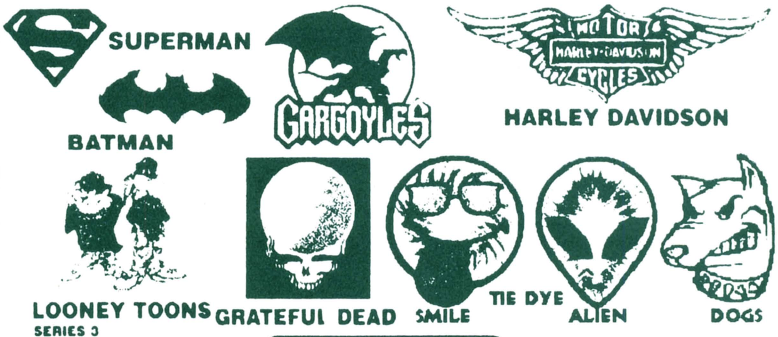
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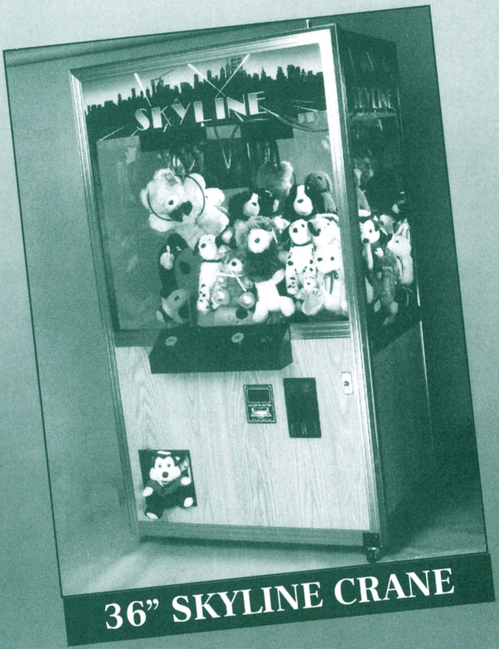

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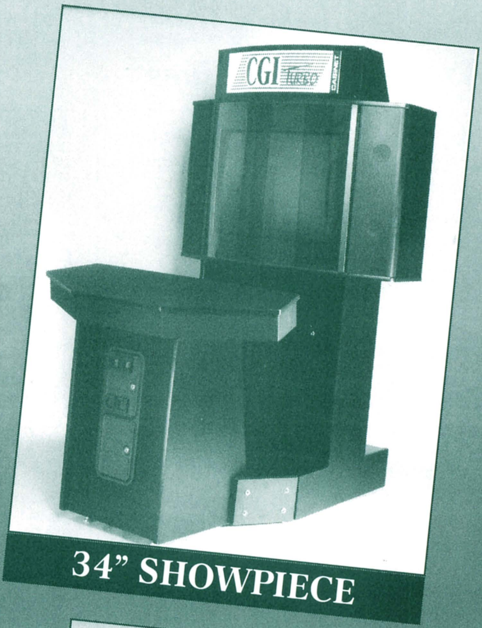

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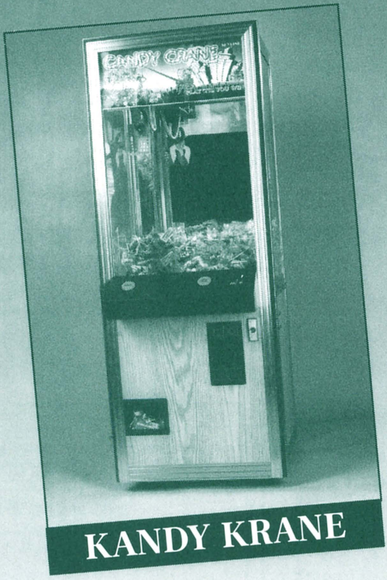
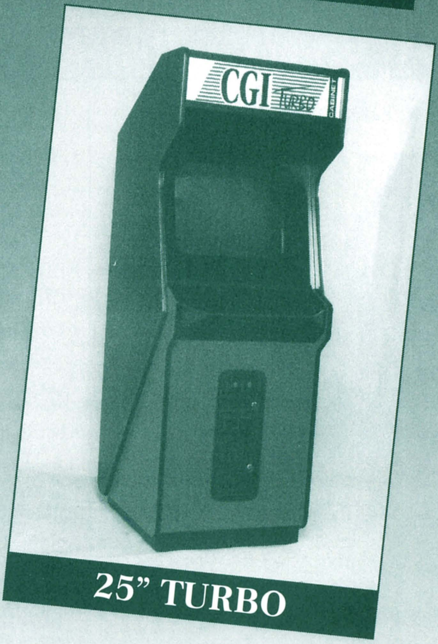


KANDY KRANE



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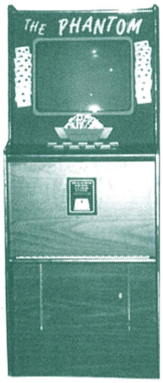

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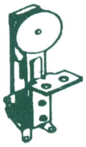

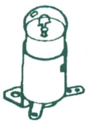

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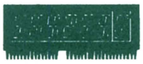

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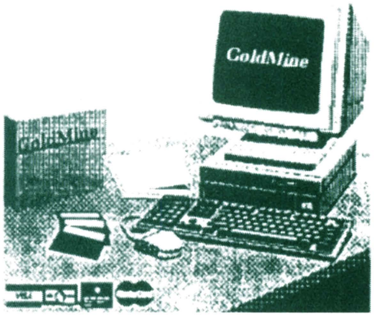

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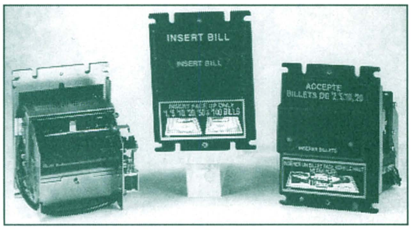

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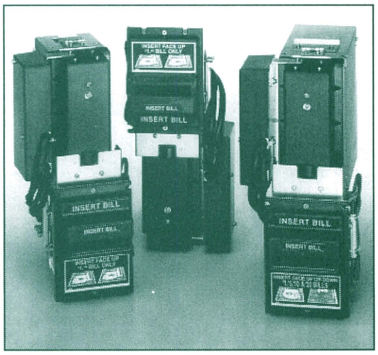

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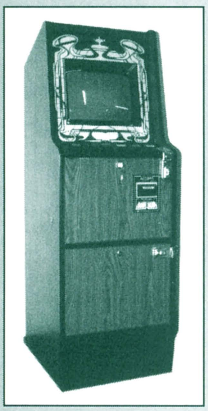

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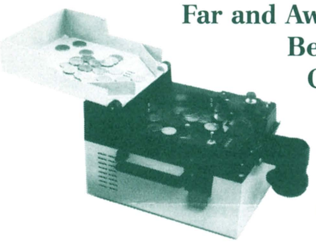

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- Ticket meter can easily be added
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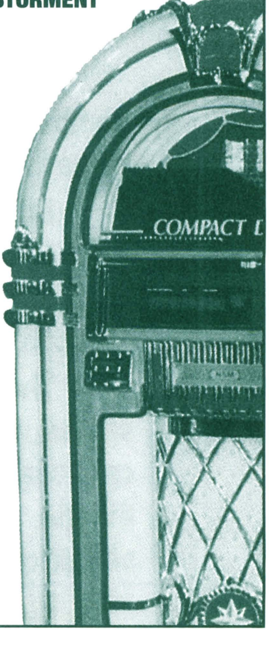

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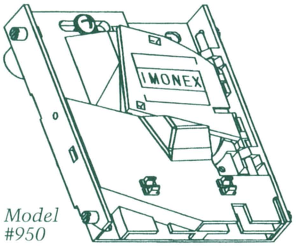

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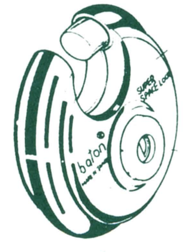

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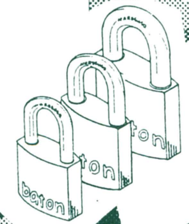

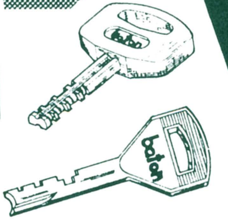

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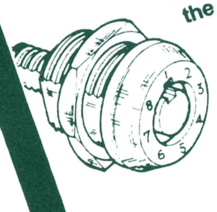

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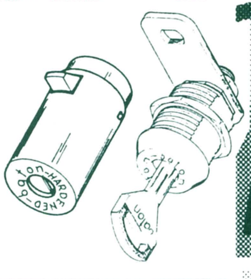

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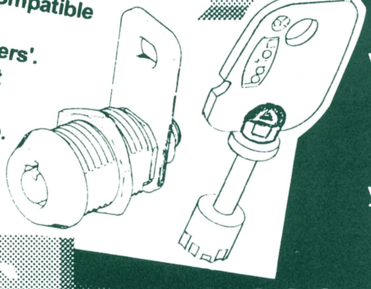

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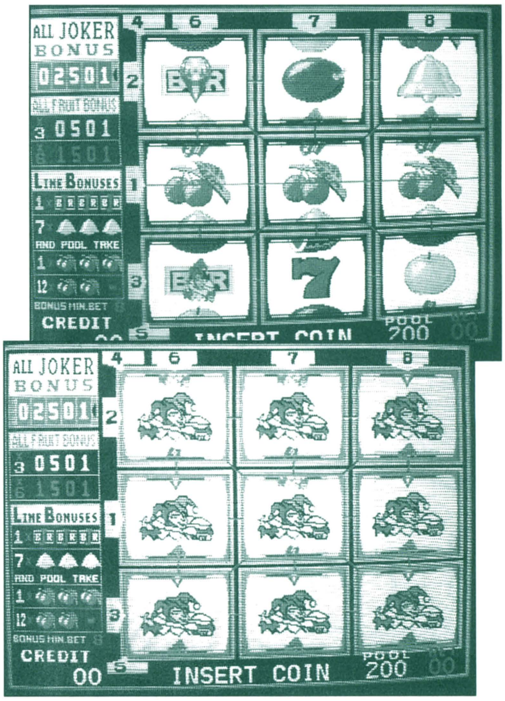

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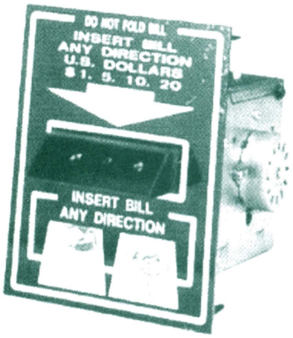
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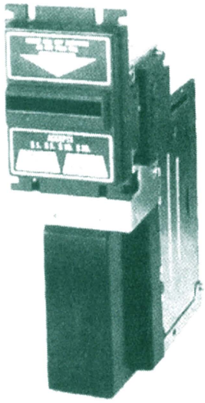

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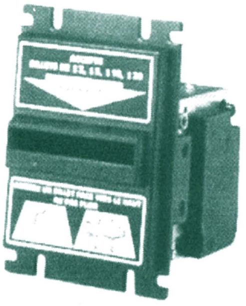

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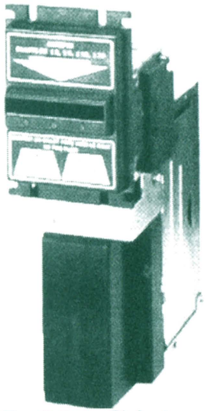

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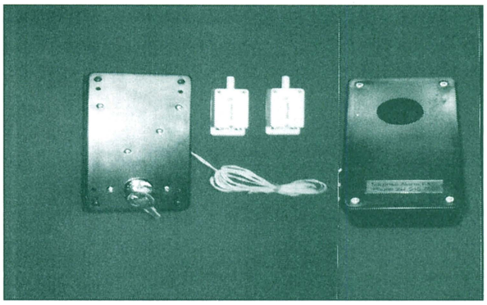

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All Auctions Begin At 10:00 a.m. Local Time

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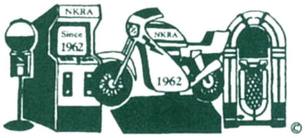

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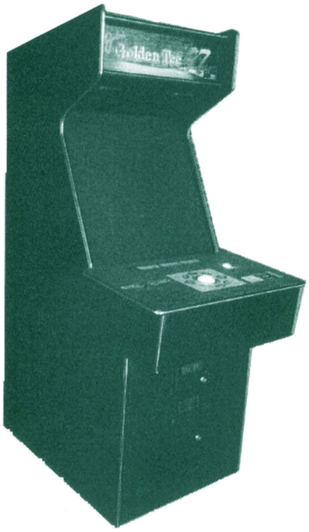

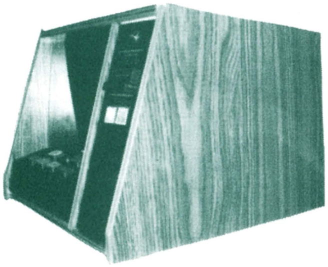

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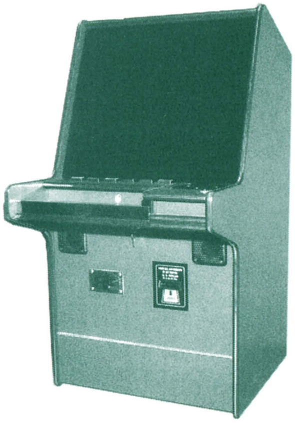

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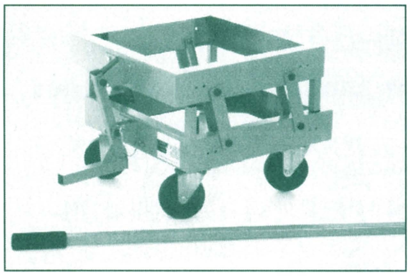

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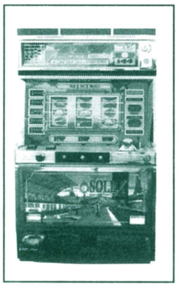

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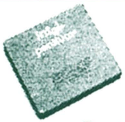

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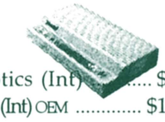

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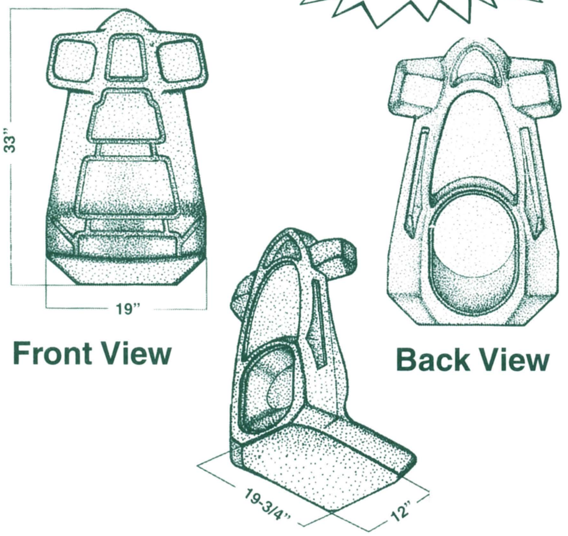

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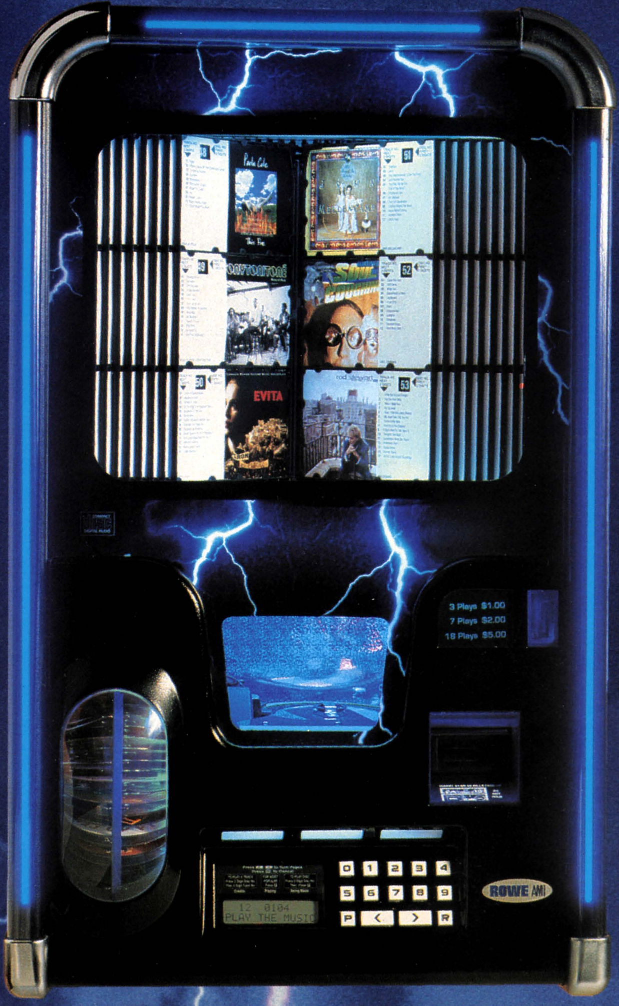

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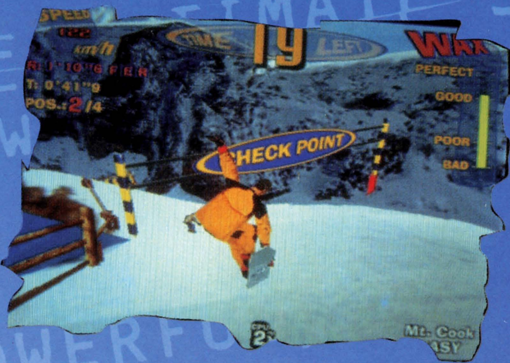
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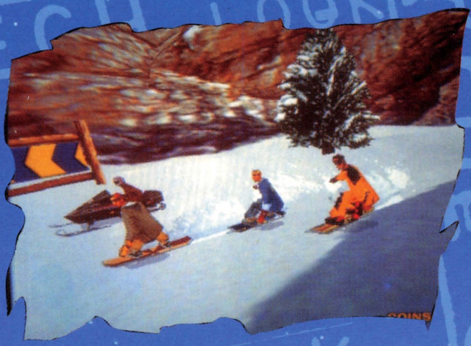

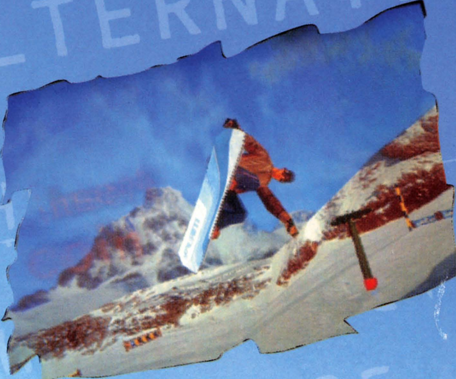

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- Street-priced universal kit
- Linkable up to two units

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